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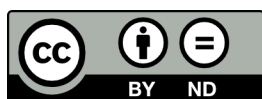
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Gregson, Jon and Fawssett, Susan (2020). TIDE:Scoping Report, Version 2. Future Distance Education related HE Sector Strategy. Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE).

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SCOPING REPORT

Future Distance Education related HE Sector Strategy

Towards
National Education
Strategic Plan
(NESP, 2021-2030)

Jon Gregson and Dr Susan Fawssett
February 2020

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TIDE Scoping Report, Version 2

Authors: Jon Gregson and Dr Susan Fawssett

February 2020

This report was produced by the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project, part of the UK-Aid-funder SPHEIR programme (spheir.org.uk) and is licensed CC BY ND 4.0

Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project enriched distance learning in Myanmar by building the capacity of Higher Education staff and students, enhancing programmes of study, and strengthening systems that support Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) in Myanmar. TIDE was part of the UK-Aid-funded Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) programme (www.spheir.org.uk). SPHEIR is managed on behalf of FCDO by a consortium led by the British Council that includes PwC and Universities UK International. The TIDE project closed in May 2021



Executive Summary

This scoping report on ‘Future Distance Education (DE) related Higher Education (HE) Sector Strategy’ is intended to inform decision makers and stakeholders involved in HE policy making. The paper provides background information and sets out options for the future. It particularly focuses on the future role of DE. It has been drafted by members of the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project team, following a series of ‘Scoping workshops’ designed to engage stakeholders and explore future options.

The report provides a review of progress in DE in the HE sector from the period of the commencement of the current National Education Strategic Plan (NESP 2016-21), highlighting major policy changes, trends and developments. It seeks to clarify the way forward in terms of institutional roles for different Universities involved in Arts and Science related DE, and the potential for HE/DE to benefit from the rapid developments in access to mobile technology and ICT infrastructure. A review of the main elements of the report follows together with the major recommendations.

The 2017 Baseline

The baseline for this report is 2017 coinciding with the commencement of implementation activities relating to the first NESP. This section outlines some of the key developments around that time and characterises some of the main challenges identified.

The NESP has led institutional change in HE/DE with the creation of the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC)¹ and two related subcommittees – National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC) and the National Curriculum Committee (NCC). Such institutional development reflects the renewed emphasis on HE/DE in light of Myanmar’s need for skilled and employable graduates.

Up until 2019, degrees arising from DE study have been awarded by Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE). These institutions have provided the academic oversight of the degrees, as well as creating all the study materials for the courses (Gregson et.al, 2019). The DE system provides undergraduate degree courses to arts and science students and is responsible for providing degrees to over half a million students; approximately two thirds of students in HE in Myanmar. But whilst the DE system has promoted widespread access to undergraduate degrees, it has been criticised for its low quality and lack of relevance to the job market.

Quality issues arise because of major language challenges for students and HE staff, who are required to study and teach in English, but whose native language is one of over a hundred different linguistic groups. The DE system has also not yet been able to adapt to flexible learning and competency based approaches, with the model of curriculum development and approval constraining the innovative development of flexible distance education curriculum in subject areas relevant to the job market.

The lack of a strong research tradition among faculty informing distance education course development further undermines quality and relevance of teaching despite widespread agreement among university rectors that research is highly beneficial. A lack of incentives to undertake research is compounded by there being no tradition of partnerships with the

¹ See <https://myanmar.ca/edu/>

private sector and annual rotation of many academic and support staff (librarians and ICT experts) to other Universities and government. This mitigates against staffs' long term commitment to Universities, as well as being unpopular. University senior management teams are disincentivised from investing in staff capacity and building and creating new teaching and learning initiatives, such as delivering courses online and broadening access to ICT infrastructure and the internet across campuses.

The changing context (2016/17 to January 2020)

161
universities

34 day universities
delivering
distance education



Distance education
accounts for 60%
of Myanmar's
undergraduates



Wholesale
Curriculum
reform

The period since 2017 has been a dynamic period of change for the HE sector driven by a significant overall increase in the national investment in education.

Further institutional change has seen the establishment of a Rectors Committee under the umbrella of the National Education Policy Committee (NEPC), comprising Rectors from all 161 Universities. The committee does not make policy but has a key coordinating role. It is spearheading the move towards greater decentralisation of the HE sector, and giving some universities limited autonomy related to programme admissions, although not yet financial autonomy. Universities are currently discussing how they can develop their own Charters as a step to greater autonomy.

A major organisational initiative by the Rector's Committee is the envisaged 'national university cluster' approach, as part of the 'comprehensive national university idea' introduced in the NESP. There are two proposed national cluster groups, one with a focus on Yangon (lower Myanmar) and the other on Mandalay (upper Myanmar). These clusters are beginning to collaborate in curriculum and research but there are currently no clear outcomes. It is noteworthy that at this point the plans do not focus on a single national comprehensive university.

The major structural change taking place from this time period is the complete reform of the curriculum from Grade 1 right through to Grade 12 as a key strategy of the NESP. This means that eventually grades 11-12 will become part of the high school curriculum, and Universities that currently admit 16 year olds who have studied to Grade 10, will be admitting 18 year olds who have studied to Grade 12 between 2021-2023. Universities are starting to prepare new curriculum and envisage that undergraduate degrees may change from 4 years to 3 years, though no decision has yet been made on this. The establishment of the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHED), has been founded with the aim of building capacity within the HE sector in light of these changes.

It has been recognised that HE needs to be more responsive to labour market trends and that 'face to face' education alone will not deliver the scale required quickly enough. HE in Myanmar stands at a significant crossroads and needs to become responsive to the needs

of the burgeoning economy in order to support economic development. DE can play a significant role in developing the human capacity of the country, both at scale and at speed.

Reform in the DE system has been the introduction of the 'One Campus, Two Systems' model launched in 2019 which devolves the delivery of DE to the 34 Day Campus Universities. The Day Campuses now take on full responsibility for the award and delivery of undergraduate DE degrees previously undertaken by YUDE and MUDE, and the future vision for these two institutions will need to be clarified. It is hoped this reform will raise expectations and quality as day campuses offer decentralised solutions with more flexible and relevant curricula that respond to local employment needs and are designed and delivered to take advantage of local ICT infrastructure development. The majority of academics and students have smart phones, leading to hopes that through the use of digital educational technologies, the reform process may 'leapfrog' to new models of education design and delivery as Myanmar may be one of the first countries in the ASEAN region to move to 5G services.

However, there are clearly challenges around developing digital literacy. The Computer Science universities and information technology universities are more advanced regarding online administration and course delivery having benefitted from public and private investment to improve their internet access and speed. They have initiated collaboration with other universities in their region to share access and learning.

DE donor funded projects

Some of the major DE/HE focused donor projects, in particular the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE), are making a significant contribution. TIDE is helping catalyse HE reform by improving the quality, relevance, and governance of environmental science related teaching, learning and assessment. The project is organised under three main output streams: enhancement of staff capacities, enhancement of programmes, strengthening HE/DE systems. Once strategic priorities have been identified, TIDE plans to support the development of an implementation 'roadmap'.

Regional experience of HE

Some interesting HE initiatives in countries in the region, particularly ASEAN, suggest policies and trends that could inform HE/DE development in Myanmar. ASEAN has a strong commitment to education as a route to further social and economic integration with their priority themes being:

- Massification (making higher education accessible and equitable across social, income and geographical groups. Myanmar's HE enrolment rates exemplify massification).
- Privatisation (where HE takes on the characteristics of business organisations. The most obvious sign of privatisation in Myanmar has been the rise of private HE institutions).
- Internationalisation (where HE is integrated into the global knowledge and learning network. Myanmar is far behind other ASEAN nations for student exchanges and collaborative working between professors and academic staff).

One way that Myanmar could align with ASEAN and provide a robust model for HE reform is through the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF), the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, and the ASEAN Credit Transfer System. Engagement with these mechanisms could serve to drive up standards.

Looking forward

The development of good quality DE is currently constrained by lack of access to ICT infrastructure, availability of key skilled personnel within Universities for online course development and support, digital literacy skills among staff and students, a business model that incentivises University leaders and academics to develop online courses, and the skills and resources for leaders and managers to transform the DE system to align with a new vision fit for purpose for the future. Policy changes are needed to adequately resource the work needed to properly address these challenges. Some suggestions are:

- Sharing ICT infrastructure to provide the platform support essential for running short online courses developed locally or licensed for local use.
- Developing and leveraging the skills of training experts available locally and use of a Training of Trainers model and knowledge cascading approaches to rapidly develop the expertise needed to create, administer and tutor online courses.
- Developing a pool of open licensed educational resources (covering a range of media), to provide a quick way of sharing material and practices that can be used by Universities to create course materials and textbooks.
- Sharing course modules to cut the cost and time involved in course development and combining specialist modules to create different courses tailored to the needs of different student communities.
- Empowering universities to develop some of their own plans to create a strong and effective enabling environment.

In the short term the collaborative approach outlined above is currently being pursued to some extent through the '1 Campus 2 Systems' approach and Y/MUDE. However, the longer term requires a clear overall strategy. Options for future institutional models considered in this report include:

(1): Focussing on 'One Campus Two Systems'

(2): Specialist Universities with a remit for Online Course Provision

(3): Centre(s) of excellence

(4): A Myanmar Open University

These options which can be considered in isolation or some form of combination, were considered at the final scoping workshop held in December 2019 and the following recommendations were made:

- **Strengthen the ‘One Campus 2 Systems’ DE provision**, by developing short courses that enhance employability skills of students; improving the systems for collecting and analysing relevant data to help understand student progression; and encourage day campus Universities to develop strategies for course development that are responsive to demand and based on a business model that incentivises developing high quality relevant online/blended courses
- **Recommendation for establishment of a Myanmar Open University**, and developing plans for its creation, detailing specialist functions/services. Mm OU should innovate in new forms of skill delivery, develop and offer short online courses that have wide application, and focus on quality. Importance is attached to developing a legal and policy framework, a business plan, outreach and engagement strategies.
- **Recommendations for creating an enabling environment**, by identifying a guiding coalition of key stakeholders committed to deliver on the goal of creating a Myanmar Open University; forming working group(s) to develop the detailed business case including infrastructure needs for Mm OU; determining data and system requirements and introducing a staffing policy for ODL that can provide the necessary specialist capacity that will be needed in a future Mm OU

Whilst this report identifies initial steps that can be taken, a detailed ‘roadmap’ needs to be developed to set out in more detail the plans and requirements. This report is intended to provide background and context that can inform reflection for scoping innovative solutions in Myanmar’s HE/DE, that will deliver a strengthened system that is fit for purpose for the coming generation of students and citizens.

1. Introduction

This scoping report seeks to support higher education (HE) policymakers and stakeholders in mapping a future pathway for the development of distance education within the context of the policy changes currently being introduced. It is intended to reflect latest thinking among key stakeholders and provide a useful input for future high-level strategic planning .

The report starts by taking a look back at the situation in the Myanmar HE sector reviewing developments from 2017 and taking as its baseline the study undertaken by Fawssett and Gregson in 2017 which resulted in the report entitled, 'Investigation of Myanmar's distance education sector and proposals for strengthening'. That report reviewed the delivery, quality and qualities of distance education (DE) and made recommendations for reform.

The report then proceeds to summarise the major developments and announcements, institutional and policy related, around higher education since 2017 in order to understand the situation today. This includes a brief overview of HE projects from a range of donors in support of government initiated changes, and a fuller summary of the work undertaken to date in the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project².

The report then casts a wider spotlight on some interesting HE initiatives in countries in the region, particularly ASEAN members, to identify some policies and trends that could inform HE/DE development in Myanmar.

The report concludes with some recommendations for discussion, which could consolidate and extend the changes introduced by the first five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-21, and point ways forward at the policy level in the short to longer term for how distance education can best be strengthened and institutionalised in the future for the benefit of the country.

The report does not offer detailed solutions as a lot more work is needed. It provides preliminary propositions which can feed into a wider process of stakeholder discussion of policy and strategic options. Detailed work will then be needed to work out the plans, resource requirements and road map for implementing a preferred way forward.

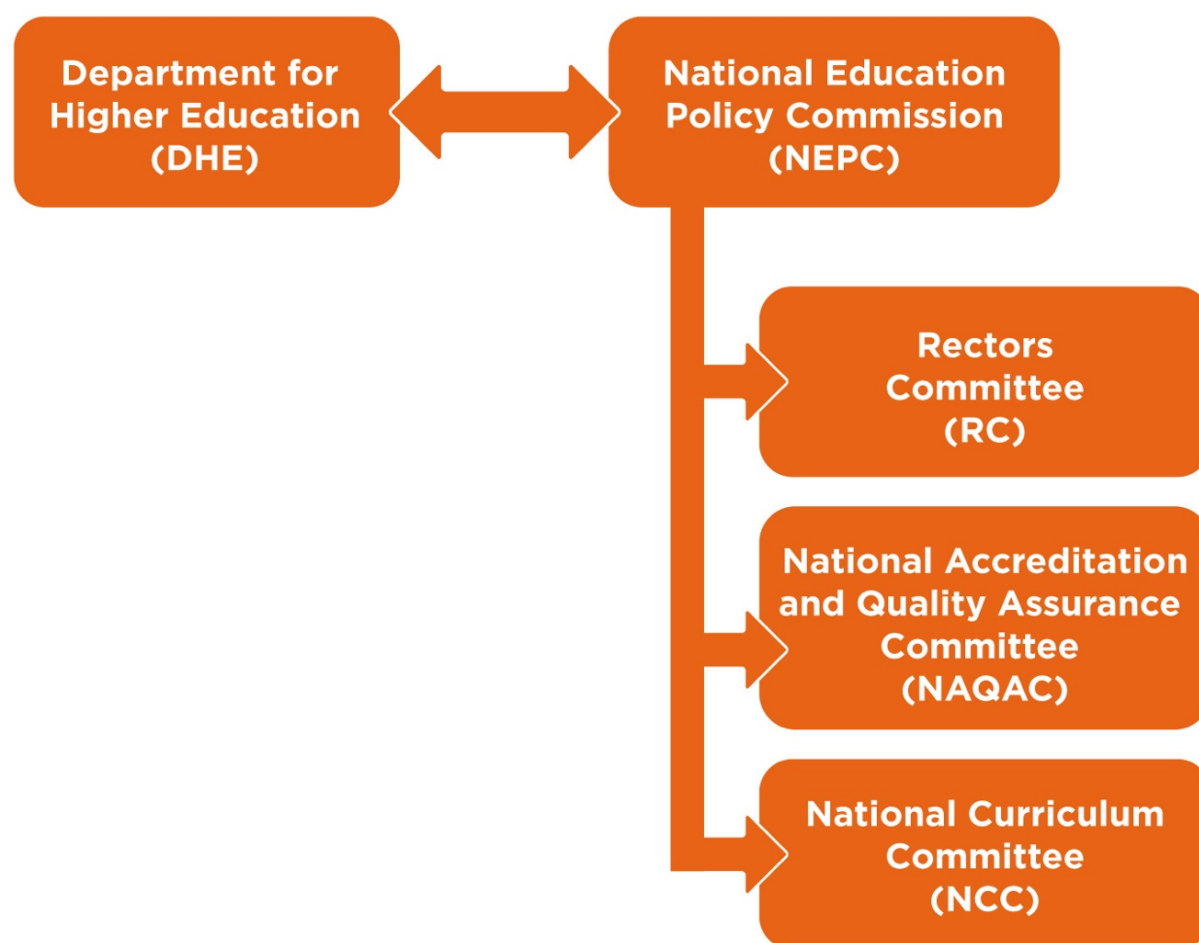
² The TIDE project is part of the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) programme, funded through UKAID (see <https://www.spheir.org.uk/>)

2. The 2017 Baseline

This report takes as its baseline the period 2016/17, which corresponds to the start of the implementation of the first five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), 2016-21, and corresponds to the period when the TIDE project inception phase commenced. This section portrays some of the key developments around that time and characterises some of the main challenges identified.

2.1 New Institutions, Strategy and Investment

During the lead up to democratic elections in Myanmar in November 2015, a reform process was initiated arising from the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR). This process progressed rapidly in the education sector resulting in the adoption of the first five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), 2016-21 which was adopted soon after the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by the State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi came to power. In response to the NESP, changes were introduced in HE/DE resulting in setting up of new bodies including the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC)³ and two related subcommittees – National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC) and the National Curriculum Committee (NCC).



³ See <https://myanmar.ca/edu/>

2.2 Status of Distance Education

Since the time of the military government in Myanmar, arts and science undergraduate courses had been offered through 34 'Day Campus' Universities distributed across the country (see Annex 2), and whilst courses were offered on campus the majority of students studied by distance education and this remains the case in 2019. The 'Day Campus' Universities provide some pre-exam, on campus tuition to distance students and support registration and distribution of printed study materials. English is the expected language of instruction and examination, and all DE study materials are in English, though some are also translated into Myanmar language. Although arrangements are now changing, up until 2019 degrees arising from DE study have been awarded by Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE), and these institutions have provided the academic oversight of the degrees, as well as creating all the study materials for the courses (Gregson et.al, 2019).

The DE system has promoted widespread access to undergraduate degrees but has been criticised for low quality and lack of relevance to the job market. With the Ministry of Education (MoE) committed to increasing investment in HE and opening up the country to greater collaboration in the ASEAN region and internationally, the need for skilled and employable graduates has become ever more urgent. The importance of upgrading the DE system and taking advantage of the benefits of a rapidly growing digital infrastructure to support online learning is recognised.

The DE system provides undergraduate degree courses to arts and science students and is responsible for providing degrees to over half a million students; approximately two thirds of students in HE. The model of education provided by DE is effectively a blended one, where students largely study independently with supplied materials, but visit one of thirty four day campus universities for intensive teaching for two weeks prior to their yearly exams. For science students there is the addition of weekend practical sessions spread throughout the academic year (Fawssett and Gregson, 2017).

The HE system as a whole comprises 161 Universities spread widely across the country. Many of these are specialist universities such as medicine, languages, agriculture, and computer science. However, the HE system in Myanmar faces a number of specific challenges.

2.3 Staffing rotation

Regular rotation of both academic (who are involved in teaching) and support staff (librarians and ICT experts) to other Universities and government takes place as part of an annual process of review that also includes promotions. Staff can typically expect to be transferred every two to three years. This rotation system is unpopular but viewed as necessary to ensure that smaller Universities and those in more rural or remote locations are able to operate with a good staff complement. There are incentives to spend time and gain experience in rural Universities, but at the same time this system does not encourage long term commitment to institutions, and academics involved in research find it difficult to develop their work. It also mitigates against senior management investing in the medium and long term development of staff (MOE, 2015, p.190).

2.4 Course quality

The DE system offers access to affordable higher education to those students who pass their matriculation exam at 16 years, but quality of education is sacrificed to inclusivity as a policy legacy of the previous government. The pedagogy of DE is a legacy model prioritising accessibility and convenience over experience and outcomes. The sector has thus far failed to adapt to flexible learning and competency based approaches, and curriculum design has lacked a focus on employability. The syllabi and content of the DE courses are determined centrally, through Boards of Study (hosted at Yangon University) which are influenced primarily by the curriculum needs for campus based courses. This could provide a basis for equivalence between distance and campus based degrees, but in practice the way in which DE is designed and delivered, which focuses mainly on reach and accessibility, results in a poor overall quality for DE. The model of curriculum development and approval may also be constraining the innovative development of flexible DE curriculum in subject areas relevant to the job market.

Access to field work and laboratories is limited resulting in little experiential learning in undergraduate programmes. Moreover, the prevailing didactic learning pedagogy nurtures a culture of 'rote-learning,' with teaching focused on the assimilation and regurgitation of knowledge rather than the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills. Poor infrastructure, poor access to ICT and a lack of specialised reference books and journals mean that students graduate with a body of theoretical knowledge but are ill equipped to become lifelong learners or prepared for the workplace (MOE, 2015, p.11). Myanmar's HE system needs significant improvement in terms of quality related dimensions, such as curriculum design, learning environment, teaching processes and research. For this to be effective at scale through distance education, capacity development, innovation and investment are needed.

2.5 Lack of research tradition among faculty

The lack of a research tradition among teachers further undermines quality and relevance of teaching. Less than 50% of faculty are engaged in research for publication with research viewed as a low priority (MOE, 2014, p.37). Despite this, there is widespread agreement among university rectors that research is highly beneficial. Research findings can be incorporated into curricula design and course materials, students can benefit from new findings that are pertinent to policy and practice, and partnerships can be established for faculty enrichment. A lack of incentives to undertake research is compounded by there being no tradition of partnerships with the private sector.

2.6 Management and governance

The management and governance of universities is highly centralised and upwardly accountable. Some universities are now being given elements of control, most noticeably in selecting their students which should improve management and governance processes. The handing over of autonomy is likely to be piecemeal until the government is certain that it is accompanied by strengthened accountability.

2.7 Language challenges

There are major language challenges for students and HE staff, who are required to study and teach in English, but whose native language is one of over a hundred different linguistic groups.

2.8 ICT Infrastructure

As a result of privatisation within the telecommunications sector, licences had been issued to three private sector mobile telecommunications providers: MPT, Ooredoo and Telenor, and plans had been launched to develop a mobile communications network throughout the country, focussing from the outset on 3G and 4G services that support Internet access. Across the country as a whole broadband access remained expensive and extremely limited, and on campus access to ICT infrastructure and internet, whilst evident at YUDE and MUDE was limited typically to at most 4Mb/s connections. YUDE offered a highly regarded online law course, but apart from this there was no significant use being made of the Internet to deliver online courses.

2.9 Recommendations made from 2017 Study on Status of Distance Education

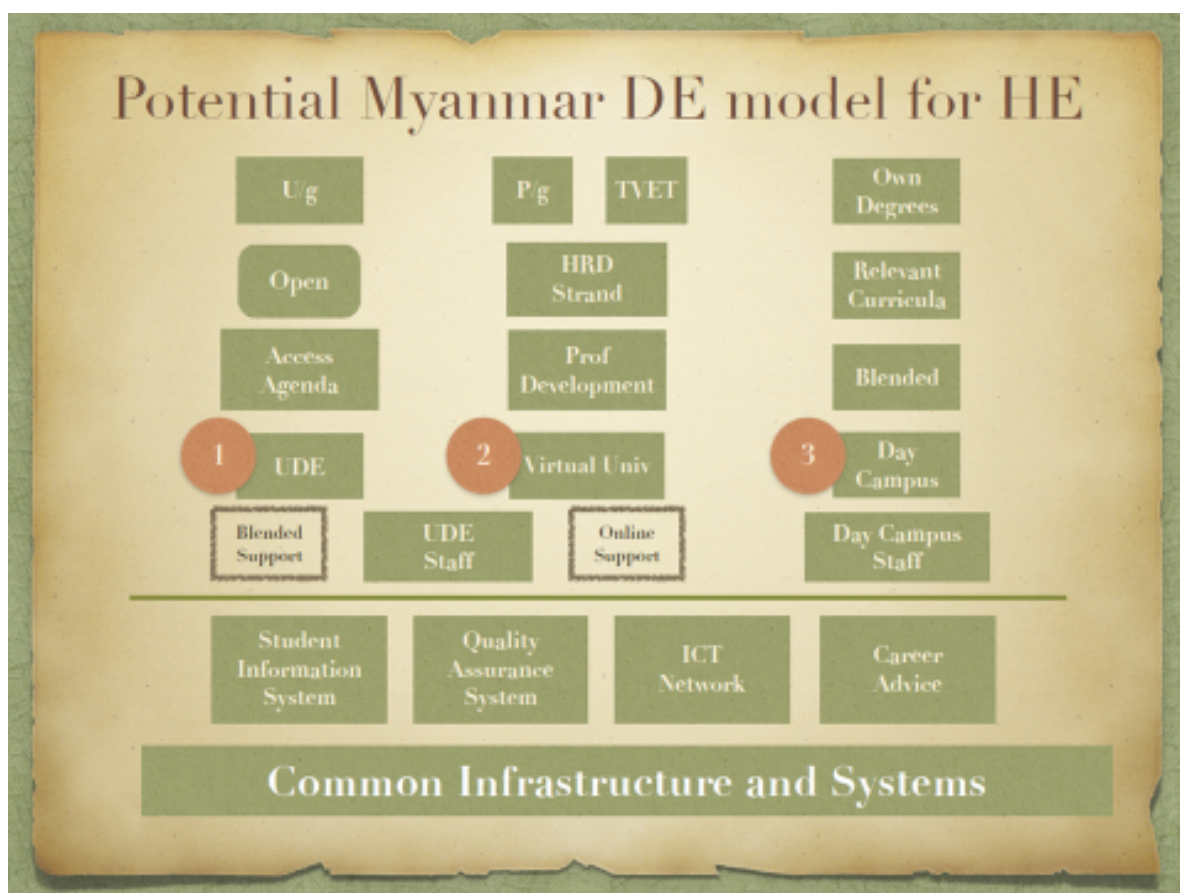


Figure 1. Three track approach to reform

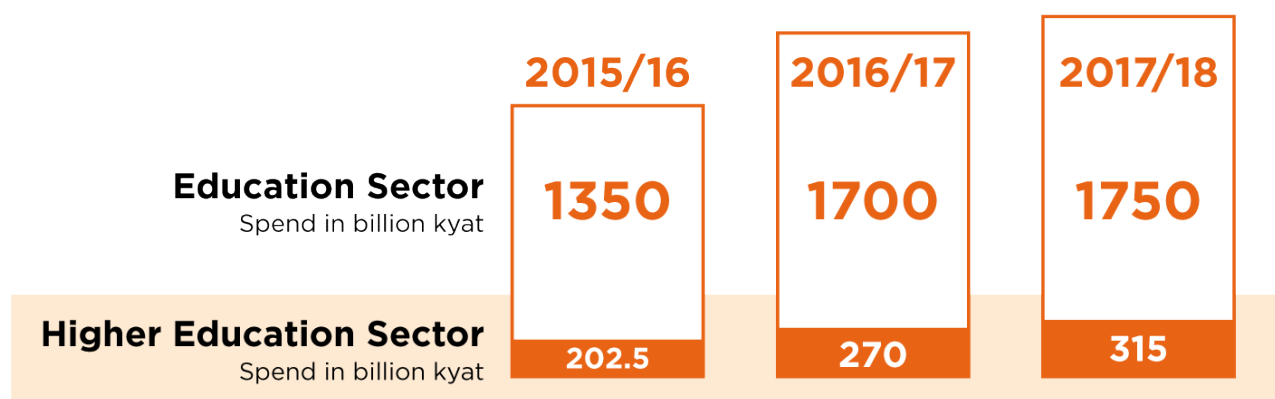
Having explored the DE sector and considered the challenges in 2017, Fawsett and Gregson made the following recommendations for a three track model.

- **Track 1:** Build on the strengths of the existing system with YUDE/MUDE around access but with enhanced teaching and learning approaches, and some move to greater use of appropriate technology (whilst retaining different delivery methods so as not to exacerbate the digital divide).
- **Track 2:** Use the versatility of online delivery to reach professionals throughout the country with a focus on postgraduate diplomas for Myanmar's current graduates which command higher fees and involving partnerships with professional bodies and the private sector.
- **Track 3:** Support selected universities to offer their own distance education programmes and award their own distance education degrees. The aim would be to encourage the development of modern, employer generated degree subjects to meet Myanmar's skills needs. Up to 10 day universities would be invited to join this track to spread career development opportunities throughout the country.

Since 2017, there have been a number of changes some of which follow various elements of this three track approach which are identified and discussed below.

3. The changing context (2016/17 to January 2020)

We now review what has happened over the last three years. This has been a dynamic period of change for the HE sector as a whole, driven by a significant overall increase in the national investment in education since 2016 as shown in the graphic and table below:



	Higher Education Sector	Education Sector	Higher Education % of Education Sector Investment
2015/16	202.5 billion kyat	1350 billion kyat	15%
2016/17	270 billion kyat	1700 billion kyat	16%
2017/18	315 billion kyat	1750 billion kyat	18%

Whilst the increased investment in HE is impressive, it is noted as starting from a low overall baseline.

3.1 The Rectors Committee and Sub-Committees

In April 2018, a Rectors Committee was established under the umbrella of the National Education Policy Committee (NEPC). The Department for Higher Education (DHE) Deputy Director General (DDG) is the Secretary to the NEPC and the Rectors Committee.

The Rectors Committee comprises Rectors from all 161 Universities in Myanmar and has a smaller Executive group who have regular virtual meetings. The committee also has a number of sub-committees and working groups, which include a DE Sub-Committee and an ICT Working Group. There is also the possibility that a Digital Education group may be launched. The committee does not make policy, but plays a key coordinating role, and the move towards greater decentralisation of the HE sector, and increasing University autonomy is a major focus for this committee.

3.2 Autonomy

11 Universities (out of a total of 161 in the country) have been given limited autonomy related to programme admissions, but do not yet have financial autonomy. This is a pilot

and if successful this could slowly roll out to include further Universities. At this point the pilot includes both Yangon and Mandalay Universities. With the support of the Rectors Committee, Universities are currently discussing how they can develop their own Charters, which once approved will guide the activities that they can undertake. This could mean that campus based Universities may start to launch more online or distance courses of their own.

Some Universities are fully embracing the potential for greater autonomy. For example, Yangon University has an ambitious masterplan for growth and improved infrastructure and the University of Mandalay has a 'zero' draft masterplan setting out plans for 2020-2025 which has already started to be implemented. The plans cover the Charter, Quality Assurance, reference to learning outcomes, and also sets out hardware and software needs. The plans are also linked to proposals for a National University cluster for Mandalay.

3.3 National university clusters

The 'national university cluster' approach was pioneered in Vietnam, where each cluster is formed as a federation of formally autonomous specialised and generalist universities under common leadership, with a strong government presence that remains the main source of policy and funding. Under the leadership of the Rectors Committee, this approach is now being explored in Myanmar, reflecting the 'comprehensive national university idea' introduced in the NESP (2016-21).

Currently, the MoE has facilitated broadly defined collaboration through Memorandums of Understanding involving two groups of universities, with a focus on Yangon (lower Myanmar) and Mandalay (upper Myanmar) as follows:

Yangon:

- University of Yangon
- Yangon University of Economics
- Yangon University of Education
- Yangon University of Foreign Languages
- Yangon Technological University
- University of Computer Studies, Yangon
- University of Information Technology

Mandalay:

- University of Mandalay
- Mandalay University of Foreign Languages
- Mandalay Technological University
- Technological University, Mandalay
- University of Computer Studies, Mandalay
- University of Technology "Yadanarpon Cyber City"

Consideration is also being given to including Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE) within this plan.

The MoUs encourage collaboration in curriculum and research but there are currently no clear outcomes. Potentially, there could be research collaborations in areas of practical and

national need (like water, energy, sustainability, tourism) and the opportunity to connect theoretical and applied perspectives in science, technology and social science.

Each university currently has its own administration. The first stage envisaged would be a National University Council, and for Universities to begin to collaborate on research. The next stage being discussed would involve administrative collaboration. Universities currently have separate charters and new rules, regulations, charters etc would be needed for administrative harmonisation, Thus, further clarity on how the National comprehensive universities would be set up is needed.

Consideration is also being given to a similar model at State level, with initial thought being given to a comprehensive State level University being established in Shan State (based in Taunggyi).

Note that at this point the plans do not focus on a single national comprehensive university, nor do they include a proposal for a National Open university.

3.4 Curriculum reform

The National Curriculum Committee (NCC) which is one of the sub-committees of the NEPC is in the process of overseeing a complete reform of curriculum from Grade 1 onwards right the way through to Grade 12. This is a key strategy of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP, 2016-2021) and eventually grades 11-12 will become part of the high school curriculum, which means that Universities that currently admit 16 year olds who have studied to Grade 10, will be admitting 18 year olds who have studied to Grade 12.

The transition at the University level will take effect from 2021-2023. This could have significant impact on the DE system, and Universities are starting to prepare new curriculum now, and envisage that Undergraduate degrees may change from being 4 years to 3 years, though no decision has yet been made on this.

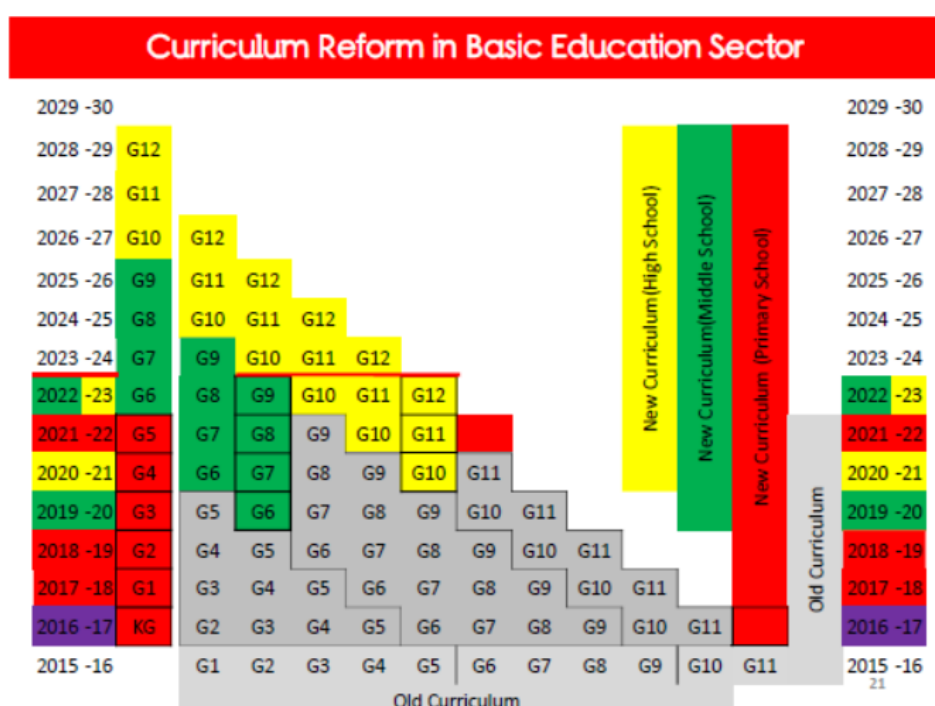


Figure 2. Curriculum reform

3.5 High school leavers

Currently at the end of Grade 10, approximately 700,000 school leavers annually sit a matriculation exam which influences what courses they can study and which Universities they may be able to join after completing school. Approximately 600,000 each year leave school and do not enter the Higher Education System. A new High School certificate is being introduced in 2019, which will have three grades. Our understanding is that an 'A' grade will enable a student to gain access to a leading University and courses such as engineering and medicine, a 'B' grade will enable access to a Distance Education University course, and a 'C' grade will likely mean that the student will not have access to higher education and will need to develop workplace skills. The certificate is currently for 16 year olds, but in two years' time as a result of the curriculum reform process, it will be for 17 and 18 year olds.

As the curriculum reform progresses, there is a recognised need to provide clear pathways (to work and higher education) for the 16-18 age group who have up to now been eligible for University entry.

3.6 National Institute for Higher Education Development (NIHED)

At the institutional level, it has recently been agreed that NIHED can be established. Over the next year as part of Phase 2 of a separate project, Transforming Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme (THEMP), run with support from the British Council and the Irrawaddy Policy Exchange, the institute will be set up (see below). The aims of NIHED will include capacity development for the HE sector, a focus on professional development (which could link to Professional Support Frameworks such as the United Kingdom Professional Support Framework UKPSF), and establishment of a Change Management peer group based around existing staff placed in Universities who have the skills needed to champion and support change.

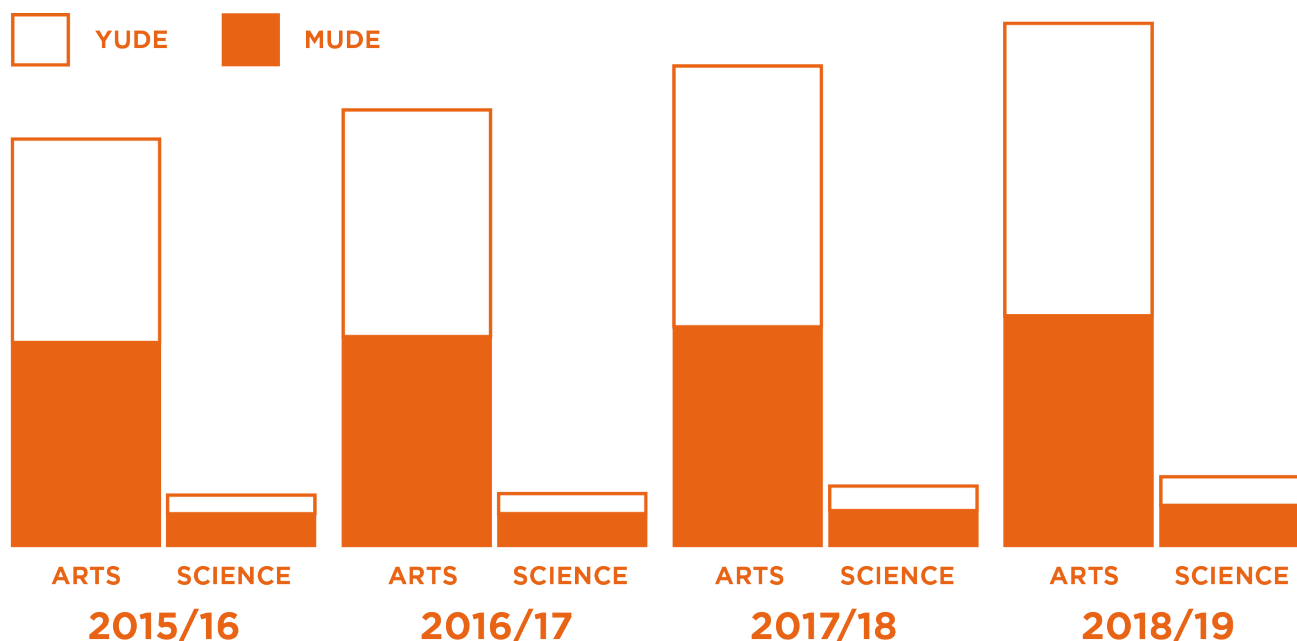
Transforming Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme (THEMP) Project Overview

In 2018 the 'Transforming Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme' (THEMP) project worked with five Universities now supported by TIDE (Mandalay, Myitkyina, Sittway, Taunggyi and Yangon), and participants in the THEMP project conducted change management related studies. THEMP also developed course materials, programme handbooks to support future programmes delivered by NIHED and other MoE organisations. They are looking to further develop the NIHED senior trainer team and identify a 'sub-team of mid-level professionals to join the NIHED trainer group'.

Note: There are clear synergies with the TIDE project Change management components which need to be built on, and NIHED may also be looking to adopt a 'Professional Standards Framework' which could link to TIDE work on competencies.

3.6 Changes in the Distance Education System

HE in Myanmar stands at a significant crossroads and needs to become responsive to the needs of the burgeoning economy in order to support economic development. It is recognised that HE needs to be more responsive to labour market trends and that 'face to face' education alone will not deliver the scale required to meet this need quickly enough. Distance education can play a significant role in developing the human capacity of the country, both at scale and at speed. It continues to attract significant numbers of registered distance education students having grown rapidly in recent years, as shown in the table below.



	Arts		Science (See note)		Total		Overall Total	+	%
	YUDE	MUDE	YUDE	MUDE	YUDE	MUDE			
2015/16	214474	214674	33790	19823	248264	234497	482761		
2016/17	220540	239339	33851	21297	254391	260636	515027	6.68%	
2017/18	230990	275224	37038	26034	268028	301258	569286	10.53%	
2018/19	242668	308580	42649	30232	285317	338812	624129	9.63%	

Trends in Distance Education Student Registrations

Note: Science totals for MUDE above include business, public affairs, home business and business management

3.7 One campus, two systems

The major recent reform in the DE system has been the introduction of the 'One Campus, Two Systems' model, announced in August 2018 and launched in 2019. This is an adaptation of Tracks 1 and 3 in the Fawssett and Gregson paper and devolves the delivery of DE to the 34 Day Campus Universities. The Day Campuses now take on full responsibility for the award and delivery of undergraduate distance education degrees previously undertaken by Y/MUDE. In 2019, new distance education students are registered with the Day Campuses, and graduation ceremonies are being arranged locally. From 2020, the degrees themselves will be awarded by the Day Campuses and not Y/MUDE. This change could help raise expectations in relation to DE quality, relevance and as a pathway that offers flexibility, not just for those perceived as the weaker students.

This policy announcement represented a radical system change that in the short term is disruptive. It has the potential to pave the way for transformative decentralised solutions, as 'Day Campuses' will potentially have more devolved responsibility related to the blended mode of DE they offer. There is also scope for more flexible and relevant curricula that responds to local employment needs and that are designed and delivered in a manner that takes advantage of local ICT infrastructure development.

Likewise, there is scope for some Universities to emerge as leading online course providers, that develop use of appropriate educational technology driven by pedagogical innovation suited to the Myanmar context. However, the education and pedagogic approach they offer will need to change significantly if they are to be able to provide the competencies employers are looking for.

This reform could also make it attractive to those not interested in full-time degree studies because of their jobs or other circumstances, if it leads to the provision of postgraduate or short courses, responding to elements of Track 2 (see above). Some Day campuses are already exploring the potential for developing postgraduate certificate level courses under the Human Resource Development (HRD) route, which could respond to this opportunity.

There is also a willingness noted at some 'Day Campus' Universities to develop strategy that draws on new capacity, pedagogic skills and innovation⁴, to design and deliver blended learning courses that respond to local needs and take advantage of rapid improvements in ICT infrastructure. For example, Yadanabon University was considering developing a requirements /strategy document covering:

- Potential new courses and assessment of demand
- Processes for engaging with employers in course development and delivery
- Scope for local and international collaboration with other Universities
- Licensing of course content
- Implications for resourcing – budget, people skills
- Student engagement

The process they envisaged focussed on reviewing the current portfolio, considering what can be stopped or improved, and what can be added and introduced in new ways. If this is successfully developed it could provide significant insights for all 'One campus Two systems' Universities, that highlight change management support needs and policy implications for HE/DE strengthening.

⁴ Applying skills learned through the TIDE project

This example is indicative of a wider desire to create online courses on a range of topics across universities, many likely to be justified in terms of local need for such learning. However, there are also a number of constraints holding back creativity. These include lack of understanding of online learning design, how the courses could build towards a programme or award, knowing how to deliver the courses, and the general sense of uncertainty regarding the future direction of HE/DE. Thus, there is a need for a more overarching strategy within which these initiatives can be fostered, integrated into recognised programmes, and shared potentially through other universities licencing the new courses.

3.8 Plans for YUDE and MUDE

The future vision for YUDE and MUDE is yet to be fully articulated, and whilst a potential upgrade into some form of Myanmar Open University has at times been mentioned, the short term agenda for these two Universities is to develop online short course provision, aligning their future more with Track 2 (Fawssett & Gregson, 2017). YUDE and MUDE are being tasked to build on existing strengths including a highly regarded diploma in law course supported via its online platform (<http://www.yudeonline.com.mm/>).

YUDE are currently focussing on the need for digitalisation and for developing high school graduate students, responding to the curriculum reform. They will also focus on supporting lifelong learning for school leavers and people throughout their careers. Constraints on their progress are uncertainty about the overall policy direction, and lack of clarity on the business model related to income share for courses going forward. Costs of hosting courses on local servers would be high, though costs for using the cloud could be lower. Assessment and security aspects of online course provision present challenges.

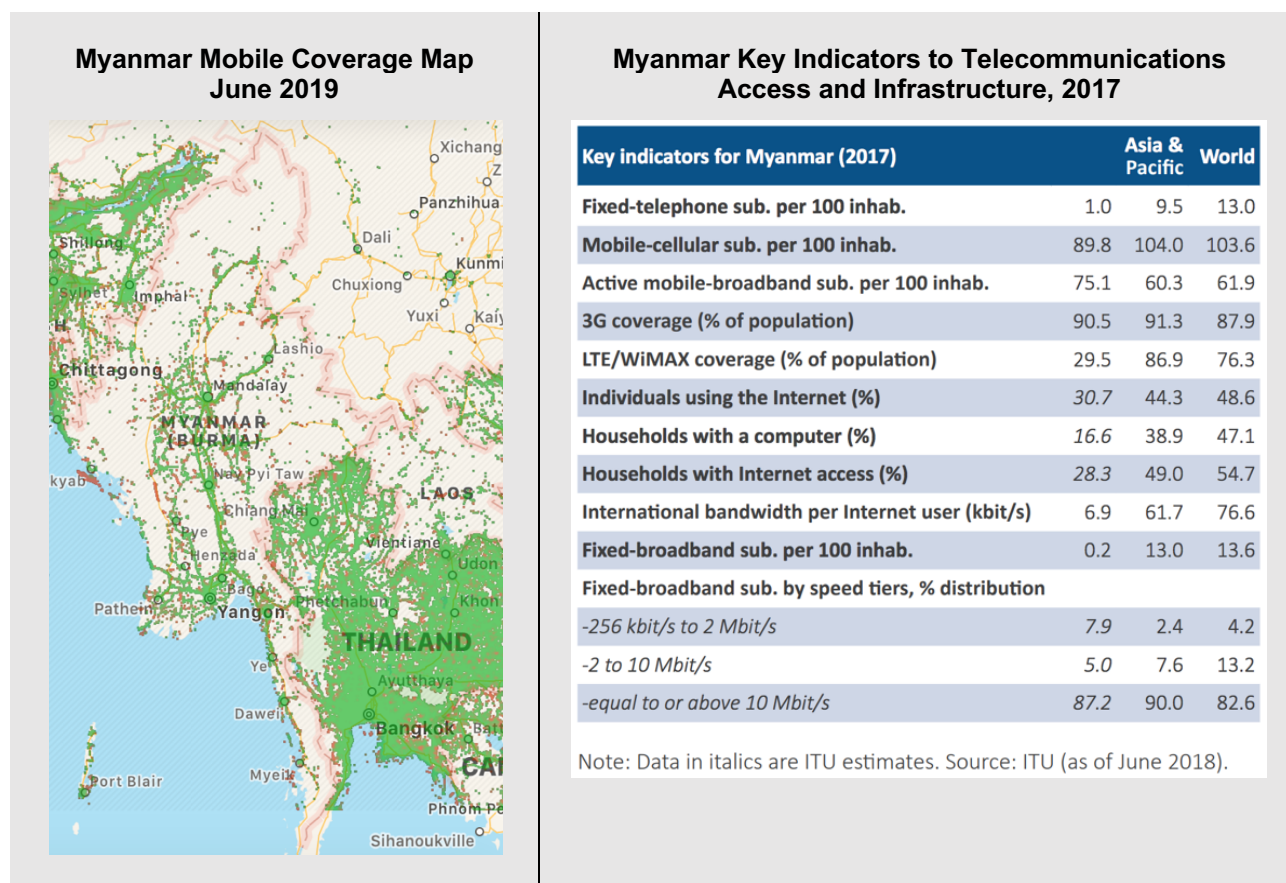
MUDE are planning a 3 month property law course and have plans for short courses related to psychology and philosophy. They have a MOODLE set up, but this is currently not being used. They would like to present these courses using a blended model as students will mainly come from the city. They hope to have 50-60 students per course. MUDE has 10mb bandwidth but has not yet decided on the best process for supporting online courses.

From the 2019 academic year the setting, checking and marking of assignments and exam papers is no longer to be undertaken by Y/MUDE, but by the partner day Universities. From 2020 the day Universities will also award the distance education degrees.

YUDE and MUDE also continue to support courses in economics and psychology, which are not offered by day campuses, and have academic departments in a wide range of arts and science subjects. These academic staff, together with ICT and administrative support staff could become more engaged in supporting online course development, delivery and tuition.

3.9 ICT infrastructure and Digital Literacy

Since 2016 the growth in ICT and Internet access, driven primarily by the phenomenally rapid spread in mobile phone roll out and cover, has resulted in the majority of academics and many distance education students having smart phones.



There are clearly challenges around developing digital literacy. With the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure growing so rapidly it is not surprising that within the Education sector there are hopes that through use of digital educational technologies, the reform process may 'leapfrog' to new models of education design and delivery, and an institutional infrastructure can emerge that can support high quality open and DE that provides courses relevant to the job market. The Computer Science universities and information technology universities are more advanced regarding online administration and course delivery. They have benefitted from investment from public and private sources to improve their internet access and speed. They have initiated collaboration with other universities in their region in order to share their access and skills in developing online courses utilising audio / video production.

Most of the 34 day campuses involved in DE provision have their own libraries, but these mainly service day students, and distance students only have access when they visit the campuses prior to examinations or for the science students when they attend at the weekend for practical lab work. There is currently no remote e-library access, and ICT access on many campuses remains limited. Whilst the bandwidth on campus is increasing year by year the connections (in 2019) are typically 4-10 megabits per second (Mbps), with greater bandwidth typically allocated to administration and library, but not to academic

departments. On some day campuses (e.g. Dagon, Yadanabon) the bandwidth is much greater, and on many campuses there is also evidence that MPT alongside MOE is providing increased bandwidth.

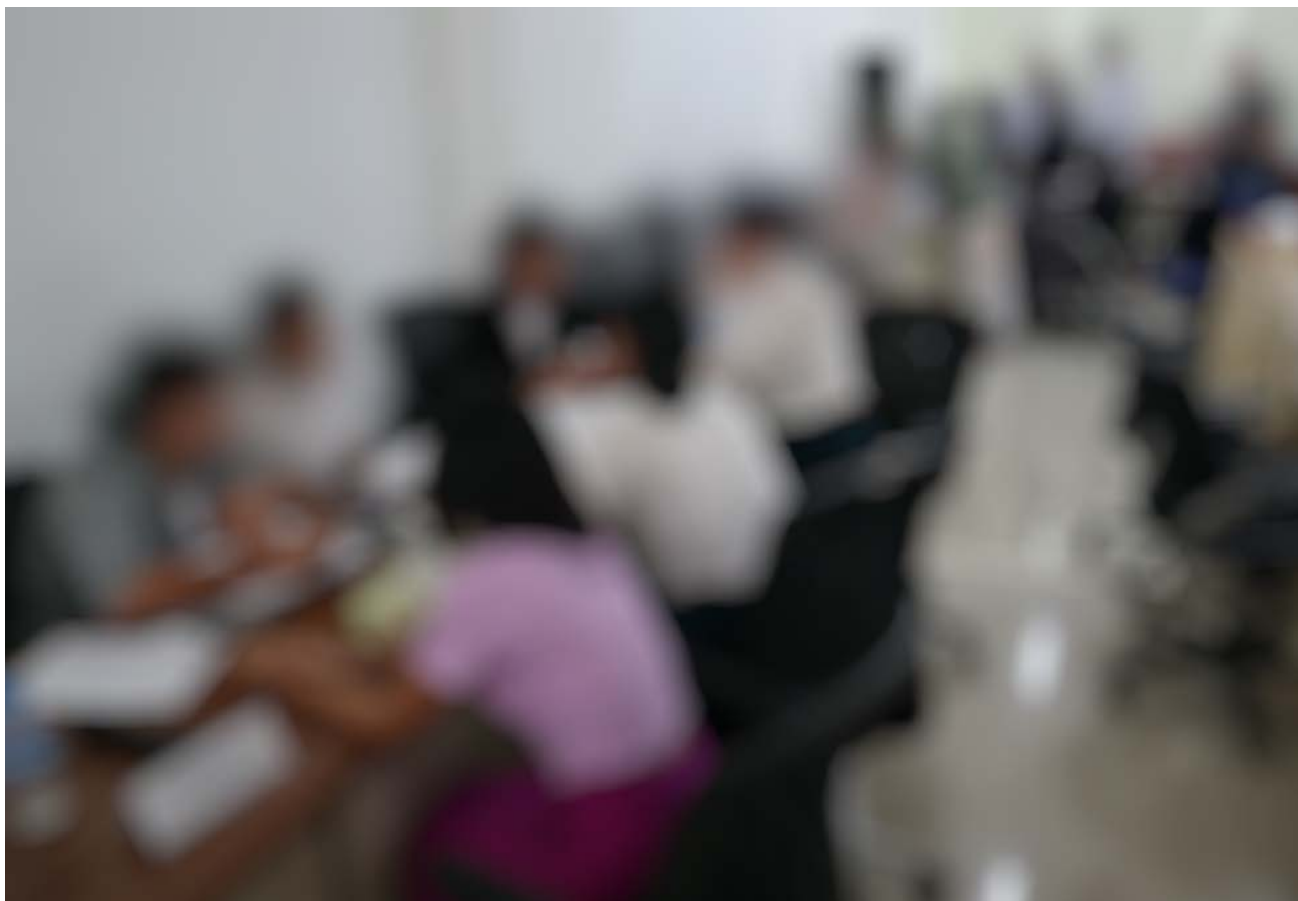
There is very limited investment in employing skilled ICT staff, and many ICT installation and maintenance tasks are outsourced to third parties (Gregson, et.al, 2019). The roles of 'learning technologist', that draws on skills and understanding in learning design and use of relevant ICTs for different models of educational delivery, and 'instructional designer' that draws on pedagogic skills in educational content design, are not currently evident in Universities delivering distance education.

E-government programme

A new e-Government programme is being launched covering all Ministries including the MoE. Within the MOE a server has been set up that acts as a data centre for staff related matters, and a range of services related to student administration and performance.

Distance Education Focussed Donor Funded Projects

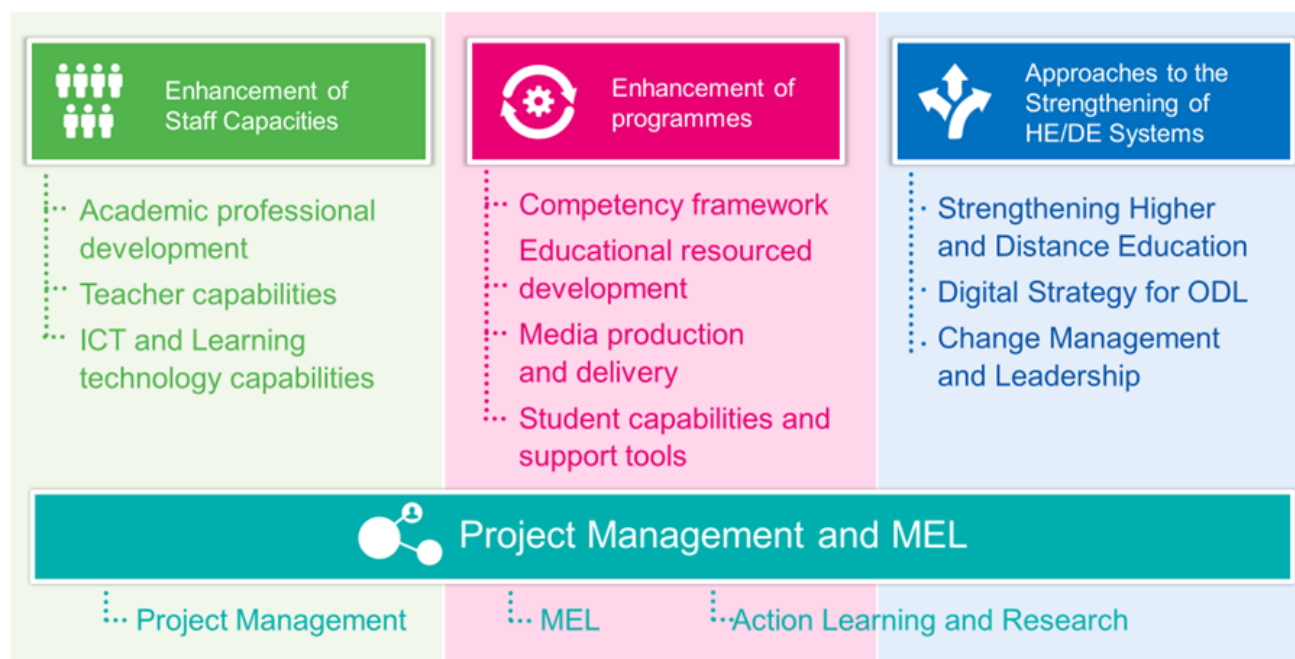
4.1 Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE)



Participants at the Digital Strategy Workshop, held at UIT Yangon in February 2020

The Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project commenced in February 2018 and runs until the end of September 2021. It is the main international project aimed at supporting the development of the HE sector in Myanmar, and specifically on strengthening DE. It is part of the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) programme which is an international programme with nine projects administered by British Council, Universities UK and PwC, funded through the UKAID.

TIDE seeks to help catalyse HE reform by improving the quality, relevance, and governance of environmental science related teaching, learning and assessment. TIDE is focussing mainly on DE as it accounts for over 60% of Myanmar's HE students. The partnership seeks to innovate and strengthen the quality of the DE system at institutional levels and in the design and delivery of teaching, learning and assessment, making use of the rapidly emerging ICT infrastructure and mobile telecommunication networks. The project is organised under three main output streams as illustrated in the diagram below:



The work carried out up to January 2020 is now summarised:

Output 1: Enhancement of Staff Capacities

Four one week residential schools aimed at the capacity development of academics and support staff have taken place. Over 220 academics and support staff from 21 Universities have so far participated (see Annex 1), and a further 100 from the remaining 19 Universities and affiliated colleges involved in distance education will participate in 2020. In addition, a large number of in-country seminars and online webinars have been conducted, and participants have also been encouraged to complete selected online courses.

The focus for academics involved in these activities has been on developing their academic knowledge related to Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EfESD) and gaining new skills in learner centred teaching and pedagogy to equip them for delivering distance education, including online and blended learning approaches. A strong focus is on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills, digital literacy and 21st century workplace skills.

Output 2: Enhancement of Programmes

Work carried out so far under this output includes engagement with potential employers of graduates from environmental science subjects, which is contributing to ongoing discussions relating to the formulation of a competency framework. At this point the focus is on generic skills for graduates, and skills relevant to working on Environmental Impact Assessments.

The participants from the 21 Universities currently involved in the Residential School and related capacity development activities, are working in small teams to create Open Educational Resources (OERs) and it is hoped that these will contribute to a pool of content that can be drawn upon and used in new and existing courses (which could include distance and face to face courses).

Work is also being done to develop ideas for short online courses that can be offered by Y/MUDE and some of the Day Campus Universities. This work involves discussing how in the short to medium term courses could be offered and supported online given current ICT infrastructure constraints. This has led to exploratory discussions relating to potential collaboration with Universities such as MIIT, CyberCity UIT Yadanabon, UIT Yangon and UCSY. A strategy for online course production that the TIDE project can support is being developed, and workshops and training have taken place related to media production, use of online platforms, and development of awareness of use of Audio and Video as well as some specialist training for YUDE and MUDE.

The project team is also engaging with students, and assessing their readiness for online learning, in terms of technology access, digital literacy and language factors. This work is leading to development of additional OERs aimed at developing relevant student skills, and exploration of the potential requirements for a Digital Education Platform, which at its most ambitious level could provide a platform for lifelong learning at the HE level supporting online and blended learning approaches. Developing such a platform is beyond the scope of TIDE, but the project is contributing to the formulation ideas for a proposal for such a platform to be developed.

Four E-learning pilots focussed on ‘teaching and learning’ are also exploring how new processes such as effective online learning design, and developing and using Open Text Books can be encouraged.

In 2020, some of the TIDE activities in this output, are being formulated as a ‘Masters Training Programme’ to train TIDE participants who can train others, and develop wider expertise in online and distance education and licensing of content which will equip those who wish to develop online courses to have the necessary skills themselves and the skills needed to train others. ‘Cluster training events’ to provide opportunities for local mentoring and support and respond to emerging needs for a cluster of Universities in different parts of the country are also being planned, so that participants from the Residential Schools can use their skills back at their Universities. In this way the TIDE project can have greater impact.

Output 3: Approaches to the strengthening of HE/DE systems

The final output looks to the future, and a key aspect of the TIDE work on this, is to convene and support discussions among key policymakers, decision influencers and stakeholders to formulate vision and strategy for the future role of distance education in Myanmar HE. As well as convening three 'Scoping workshops' that have taken this discussion forward, the project also ran a 'Foresight' workshop with younger generation stakeholders to develop and reflect on future '2030' scenarios for the role of distance and online education. The drivers of change, related foresight scenarios, and recommended strategies to achieve desirable future outcomes are included in an edited version of the 'Foresight Workshop Report', provided in Annex 3. These workshops and follow up work done between them, have informed this report and the recommendations that follow.

Following on from the scoping work, once strategic priorities have been clearly identified, the TIDE plans to support detailed planning so that a clear implementation 'roadmap' can be developed and agreed by key stakeholders. This work will be designed to complement initiatives that may already be being progressed by DHE and MOE.

Alongside the scoping and road-mapping work, the TIDE project team have also been working to develop an understanding of the potential role of digital technologies in supporting innovation and enhancement of distance education. The team has recognised the rapid progress in availability and use of mobile technology as a uniquely important factor when considering the role of digital technology in distance education. The speed and reach of the roll out of 3G and 4G mobile networks since 2013 has been very impressive, and Myanmar is on the verge of being one of the first countries in the ASEAN region to move to 5G services, potentially in collaboration with Huawei.

A 'mobile first' approach to design and delivery of DE that leverages use of video and audio content and seeks to make effective use of technology and m-learning design for DE is therefore regarded as critical to success.

An ICT working group has been established which includes representation from public and private sector Universities, and private sector companies, innovation hubs and NGO initiatives. This group has supported one workshop which based on an understanding gained of the digital landscape in Myanmar (including current initiatives and capacities), began to identify key digital strategy priorities which could inform TIDE project work. The box below outlines the importance of developing a digital strategy, and some provisional objectives already identified.

Emerging Digital Strategy

Digital approaches seek to leverage technology to serve educational objectives. Amongst other things platforms for hosting online courses are desperately needed. Conversations with Myanmar faculty suggest they are ready to write online courses, and the learning design support provided by TIDE and USAID COMET can equip them, but motivation and momentum could lapse if their work cannot find an online platform from which to offer their courses.

A strategic agenda related to the use of digital technology is not yet clearly mapped out in Myanmar. Yet there is a recognised need to develop some understanding of what digital technology could contribute to HE/DE at the national level, and then for donor activities to focus on how ICT can respond to the strategic priorities related to enhanced use of digital technology.

A digital strategy for HE is not a new idea, though there are few publicly available examples to be found. One relatively recent example is the Scottish Governments Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy (2016), that outlines the value added in terms of 'enhancing learning and teaching', 'improving educational outcomes' and 'building digital skills'. The strategy is organised under four major objectives:

- 1) Develop the skills and confidence of educators in the appropriate and effective use of digital technology to support learning and teaching
- 2) Improve access to digital technology for all learners
- 3) Ensure that digital technology is a central consideration in all areas of curriculum and assessment delivery
- 4) Empower leaders of change to drive innovation and investment in digital technology for learning and teaching.

These objectives reflect the need for skill development, access, and the consideration of the role of ICTs for facilitating and empowering change. A focus on 'digital education' and the role of 'digital educators' is also starting to gain traction, and this is evident on the agendas of international conferences such as the international conference at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) on distance learning titled 'Research and Innovation for a Digital Society', and in the strategic thinking of Universities. For example, the University of London Centre for Distance Education commissioned a 'Digital Educator Project' study which was recently completed (Gillies et al, 2019) that explored the cutting-edge skill development needs for 'digital educators' involved in DE.

Within the TIDE project, workshop discussions related to digital technology have to date identified the following strategic objectives:

- Improve and extend ICT Infrastructure
- Strengthen DE/HE systems and institutions through contributing to the development of:
 - (a) future plans for YUDE and MUDE (b) regional day campus Universities that can support blended learning.
- Explore development of a National Digital Education Platform to support online education services for 16-18 year old school leavers, undergraduates, postgraduates and lifelong learning
- Develop learning management systems
- Equip staff with skills to be digital educators
- Develop students' "21st century skills"

It is anticipated that ongoing TIDE work on digital strategy will provide a timely input for the DE strengthening plans and roadmaps being developed under this Output 3.

To provide additional learning related to where digital technology based solutions could add value, and to encourage engagement with the private sector, four small ICT pilots are also being initiated. These are:

TIDE ICT Pilots

- Testing use of the Tekkatho Foundation MyLibrary product and its potential for use with DE students in 3-5 Universities
- Testing the use of Raspberry Pi computer and related MOODLE hosting, for developing access to quality educational resources by DE students in remoter parts of the country. This project is led by the myME project team and will involve collaboration with several Universities involved in DE provision
- Setting up the use of MOODLE platform at one of the TIDE supported Universities and training staff in its use. This project is being delivered by Zabai Limited in collaboration with Dagon University.
- Setting up Office 365 and providing training to staff at Pathein University and developing and testing Office 365 tools that support online learning. This project is being delivered by ATG systems

Finally, this output supports this HE system change management requirements focussed on distance education. We have developed a three cluster model with clusters in Upper, Central and Lower Myanmar. These clusters contain a total of 15 universities, and each cluster has two change management projects: one prescribed from analysis of the universities' own application form, and one chosen from common issues/interests within each cluster group, as follows:

Cluster	Prescribed Project	Chosen Project
Upper Myanmar Cluster: Mandalay, MUDE, Yadanabon, Magway, Myitkyina, Taunggyi	Quality Assurance	Developing a shared blended learning approach which benefits teachers, students and future employers
Central Myanmar Cluster: Yangon, YUDE, Dagon, Bago, West Yangon, Patheingyi	Developing effective online systems	Institutionalisation of capacity development
Lower Myanmar Cluster: Dawei, Hpa-An, Mawlamyine	Engagement with employers and employability	Development of a Digital Tourism Course

The change management work involves creating a peer network that we refer to as the 'TIDE Change Academy'. This network will comprise change champions trained as part of the TIDE change management activities. Through this network further changes can be supported, so an aim here relates to development of sustainable capacity that can scale up expertise. Learning from the change projects will also be shared more widely among other Universities.

4.2 Other Donor Funded Projects Relevant to HE Sector

Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (COMET)

This is a USAID project (2014-19) that supports universities and vocational schools to adapt their curriculum and teaching approach to better meet private-sector demands, and to engage enterprises to strengthen work-based (hands-on) learning opportunities, such as internships. Working with the Lower Mekong countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam the project has helped 12 post-secondary education institutions (of which Cyber City University, Yadanbon is one), equip youth with the workplace skills demanded by businesses. These skills include critical thinking, communication, interpersonal skills and adaptability to new technologies (USAID, 2019).

Myanmar Research and Education Network (mmREN)

The University of Computer Studies, Yangon, is leading in the development of the Myanmar Research and Education Network (mmREN) and hosts the servers which currently connect four Universities. With funding support anticipated from World Bank, there is a plan to connect twenty Universities to mmREN in 2020, and eventually extend to all Universities. The initial phase should greatly improve connectivity and bandwidth costs for Universities and services will also be identified and built to promote greater knowledge sharing between academics nationally and internationally. Included in the ambitions for mmREN is the establishment of a national online library, which would appear to link to the MERAL initiative:

“A key feature of mmREN will be the establishment of a national online library containing electronic copies of all books, journals, research papers, articles, course materials, reference books and other materials in Myanmar and English currently in use at all 173 Universities. All students and faculty will have 24 hour access to the online library” (MOE, 2018).

Myanmar Education Research and Learning Portal (MERAL)

In recent years, through the work of the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) Network3, online journal provision has been made available at a growing number of Universities. The Myanmar Academic Library Consortium5 now has 27 members and is putting in place a sustainable model for subscribing to online journals. DSpace online repositories have been established at five Universities, and there has been a recently announced plan for a Myanmar Education Research and Learning Portal (MERAL). In theory these journals should now be accessible to DE students registered at any of these member Universities. Tekkattho Foundation also provides a ‘first mile’ online/offline solution to curated and typically open licensed content within a growing number of University libraries through its ‘eTekkatho’ product.

⁵ <https://myanmaralc.org/>

4. Regional experience of HE

This section looks at regional initiatives within HE to understand how Myanmar's neighbours and ASEAN as a regional organisation are engaging with HE. ASEAN has a strong commitment to education as a route to further social and economic integration. Whilst there is great diversity in the ten member countries, it is collectively one of the fastest-growing regions of the world, with an economy of over \$2.6 trillion (Choak, 2017). The ASEAN region also has a combined population of over 620 million people (Choak, 2017). ASEAN's vision on Partnership and Sustainability seeks to:

“Promote dynamic, sustainable, equitable and inclusive economic growth in ASEAN by equipping ASEAN to take advantage and maximise the opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution through region-wide initiatives...” (2019)

A review of HE in the ASEAN region in 2016 undertaken by the HEAD Foundation identified the priority themes as:

- Massification
- Privatisation
- Internationalisation

5.1 Massification

Massification refers to making higher education accessible to many, where more than 15% and a maximum of 50% of school leavers are enrolled (UNESCO, 2004). Access and equity across social, income and geographical groups, are key concerns for all ASEAN countries. Myanmar's HE enrolment rates exemplify massification, albeit at a lower level than more economically advanced ASEAN countries. Enrolment in Myanmar is based on performance in the matriculation exam, currently taken at 16, and is therefore nominally on merit.

However, as in other ASEAN countries, this has led 'to the erosion of faculty salaries, the employment of unqualified or less-qualified staff, high student-faculty ratios, and a decay in the conditions of service, teaching, and learning' (Welch, 2011).

Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam have enrolled very large numbers of students, and it is estimated that by 2035, they will rank among the world's top 20 countries for number of students enrolled in HE.

Massification among the high income countries of ASEAN, such as Singapore and Brunei has focused on aligning the number of graduates in certain fields to the workers it anticipates it will need in the future. For the middle income ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand the focus has been on building life-long learning skills and improving the quality of education. For the lower income countries such as Myanmar, Lao PDR and Vietnam the focus is on quality in terms of basic infrastructure, such as internet access, ICT, and dormitory availability for female students. (UNESCO, 2004).

5.2 Privatisation

The second priority theme is **privatisation**, which refers to HE taking on the characteristics of business organisations, where the student is seen as a consumer and education provided as a product. It is also associated with outsourcing certain functions traditionally undertaken by the universities to private companies, such as printing, teacher training, computer servicing and data management. The most obvious sign of the privatisation of HE in Myanmar has been in the rise of private HE institutions, from zero in 2010-12, to 35 in 2015-17 (British Council, 2017).

Another clear sign of privatisation in the ASEAN region is the rise in student fees and the debate about the degree of privatisation that is socially and equitably desirable. Student fees for public universities remain low in Myanmar, although increasing student fees could be a way of meeting the growing demand for HE.

Privatisation also takes the form of collaboration with the private sector. In Myanmar, this could be a way of improving the job readiness of new graduates. However, for private sector collaboration, universities need greater autonomy which would need to be accompanied by growing accountability.

Working in collaboration with the private sector might also provide alternative revenue streams for Universities. Academics might work on projects with the private sector, encouraging greater understanding of practice in their subject area which could feed back into their teaching and provide case studies and real world context for students. Currently, in Myanmar, academics are not allowed to undertake any private work, although many do illegally, be that providing private tuition for students or consultancy work for private companies and aid agencies. If incentives can be developed to encourage faculty members to pursue research with social impact and collaborate with industry to build understanding of practice, there could be the progressive development of an education system that is more rooted in Myanmar's socio-economic realities (de Bettignies, 2019). Only with this cross fertilisation of knowledge and skills can Universities support the demands of a fast growing economy.

5.3 Internationalisation

Internationalisation is the third theme being prioritised by ASEAN for HE. It is defined as

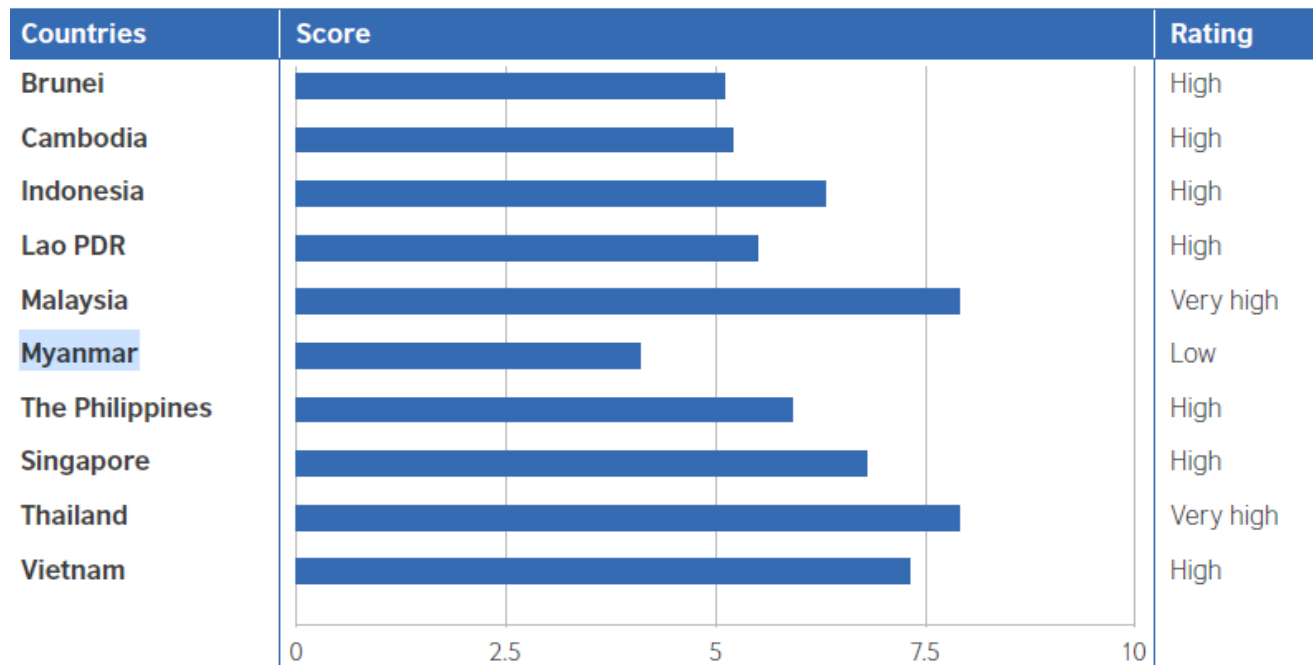
“the essence of a process whose ultimate goal should be to integrate the institution into the emerging global knowledge and learning network rather than integrate an international dimension into the existing institutional setting” (Hawawini, 2011).

The internationalisation of higher education is linked with initiatives such as Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development. This is because it contributes to the development of cross-cultural understanding and tolerance.

On many indicators Myanmar is far behind other ASEAN nations for student exchanges, and collaborative working between professors and academic staff. A report by the British Council shows that Myanmar has the lowest level of internationalisation evaluated through

the openness of higher education systems and the levels of support for the international mobility of students, researchers, academic programmes and university research across ASEAN countries.

Figure 2 Internationalization of HE systems in ASEAN countries



Source: British Council, 2018

The NESP (2016–21), provides explicit targets related to faculty training including reference to work overseas, rectors attending overseas study tours and alignment with international standards, but nothing is said on student mobility. Bolstering the procedures to encourage student mobility is part of the broader process of opening up the country to the international community, although this is at a very nascent stage as the following table on student exchange shows.

Figure 3 Student mobility in ASEAN countries

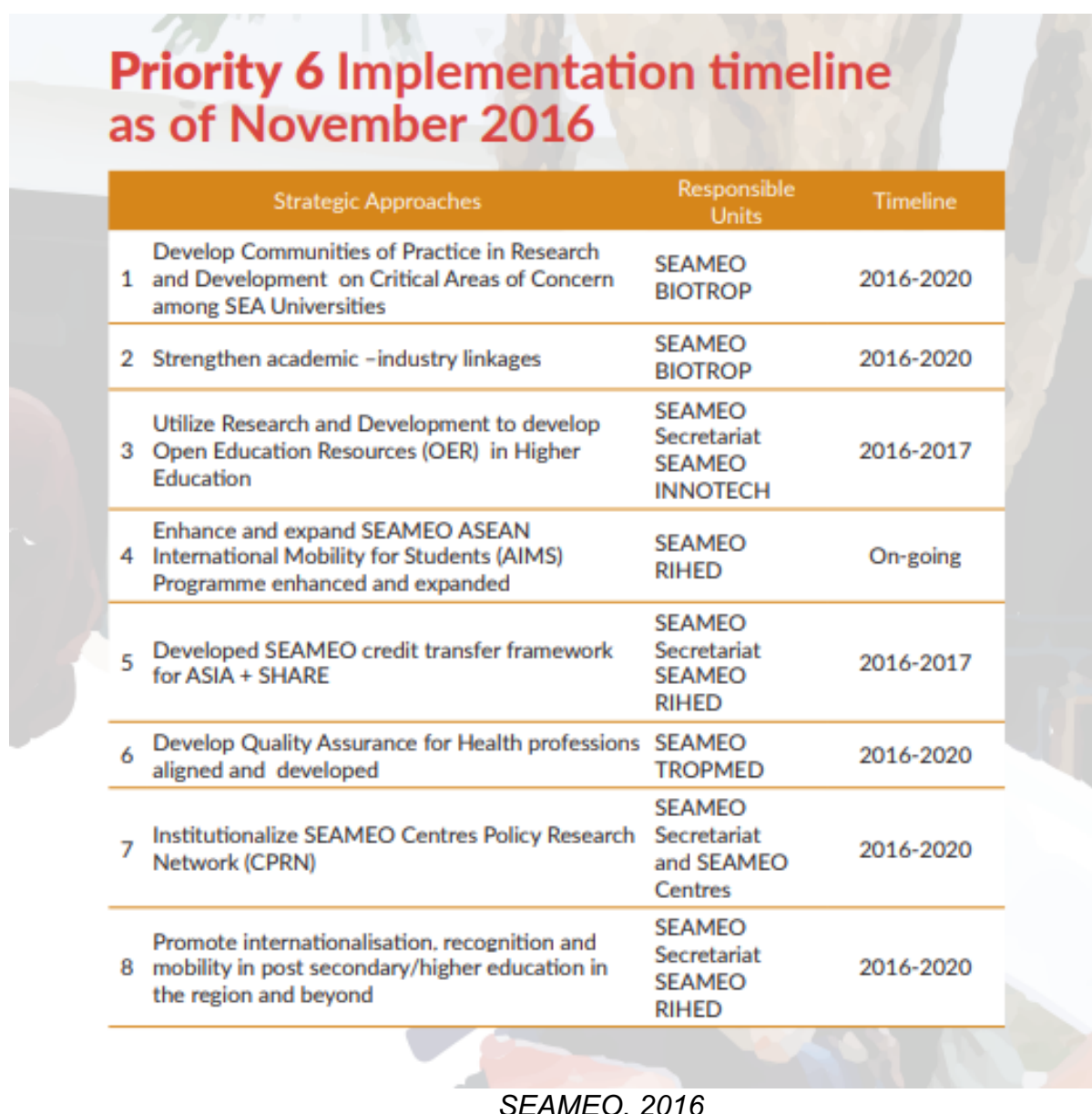
Countries	Number of local students abroad		Number of international students	
	Until 2012 ¹¹	Present	Until 2012	Present
Brunei	–	3,698	372 (2011) ¹⁴	349
Cambodia	–	5,561	–	–
Indonesia	43,000 (2011)	46,232	7,079 (2010)	–
Lao PDR	1,101 (1999)	6,129	827 (2011) ¹⁵	451
Malaysia ¹⁶	61,000 (2011)	64,655	86,923	124,133
Myanmar	1,600 ¹⁷	7,582	65 (2010) ¹⁸	–
The Philippines	8,443 (2008)	16,308	2,665 (2008)	–
Singapore	21,000 (2011)	25,057	84,000	80,000 (2014) ²⁰
Thailand	28,000 (2011)	29,768	10,967 (2007)	12,274
Vietnam	61,000 (2011)	70,328	500 (2011) ²¹	5,624

Source: British Council, 2018.

Whilst Myanmar is the country at the earliest stages of internationalization of ASEAN countries, progress is being made, most especially through the Myanmar Higher Education Association (MHEA) which was formed in 2017-8 to support those working on international higher education in Myanmar universities. It brings together those from across institutions to develop and share practice in the international education field. It is the product of a training course in international higher education work delivered to representatives of 20 universities over 2016 by the Institute of International Education.

Myanmar could work towards a programme of academic mobility, not only to academic institutions, but within the private sector also. Harmonization of HE with other southeast Asian nations is also one of 7 priority areas of South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMO) of which Myanmar is a member as shown.

Figure 4 SEAMEO Priority 6 of 7



Priority 6 Implementation timeline as of November 2016

	Strategic Approaches	Responsible Units	Timeline
1	Develop Communities of Practice in Research and Development on Critical Areas of Concern among SEA Universities	SEAMEO BIOTROP	2016-2020
2	Strengthen academic –industry linkages	SEAMEO BIOTROP	2016-2020
3	Utilize Research and Development to develop Open Education Resources (OER) in Higher Education	SEAMEO Secretariat SEAMEO INNOTECH	2016-2017
4	Enhance and expand SEAMEO ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme enhanced and expanded	SEAMEO RIHED	On-going
5	Developed SEAMEO credit transfer framework for ASIA + SHARE	SEAMEO Secretariat SEAMEO RIHED	2016-2017
6	Develop Quality Assurance for Health professions aligned and developed	SEAMEO TROPMED	2016-2020
7	Institutionalize SEAMEO Centres Policy Research Network (CPRN)	SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO Centres	2016-2020
8	Promote internationalisation, recognition and mobility in post secondary/higher education in the region and beyond	SEAMEO Secretariat SEAMEO RIHED	2016-2020

SEAMEO, 2016

Interestingly, SEAMEO interpret this harmonization as involving strengthening academic-industry linkages, a credit transfer framework, as well as greater student mobility and internationalization.

5.4 Versatile qualifications:

At the root of this initiative is rethinking the concept of DE to focus on competency based learning for adult learners in the workplace and school leavers looking to enter the workplace. The offering would be through formal and informal learning primarily through digital resources. This would acknowledge that the bachelors, masters and PhD structures are too inflexible and lengthy for many part-time adult learners (Tait, 2019). There could also be flexible postgraduate courses to support professional development within this stream.

5.5 ASEAN HE alignment:

Alignment with the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF), the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network, and the ASEAN Credit Transfer System could provide a robust model for HE reform. The AQRF supports the recognition of qualifications including DE across the ASEAN region, facilitates lifelong learning and encourages credit transfer and learner and worker mobility. The framework will allow benchmarking of qualifications against other regional qualifications and international qualifications serving to drive up standards.

Using the AQRF sets the benchmark high, as it demands dedicated methodological and pedagogical expertise but if all Myanmar HE institutions are working towards it, it will standardise the approach to modernize the HE offering and can play an important role in supporting the development of Myanmar's national qualifications framework. As the AQRF goes beyond formal learning to cover informal and non-formal learning, it can empower students to construct their own learning, across all Universities courses, DE and face to face degrees, as well as the short online courses developed as versatile qualifications. Students could move between different programs 'banking' credits toward specializations.

Figure 4: Six objectives of the AQRF



Working towards ASEAN and SEAMO standards has the potential to support internationalization efforts, and drive up standards.

5. Looking forward – Future Strategy Options

The report now considers some initiatives that key HE stakeholders might take to strengthen DE in the short to longer term.

6.1 Future Strategy Options for Discussion

The development of good quality DE and blended learning opportunities that can be offered at scale, are currently constrained by lack of:

- i) Access to ICT infrastructure that supports online systems
- ii) Key skilled roles within Universities for online course development and support such as instructional designers, AV experts, graphic designers, learning technologists and IT support staff
- iii) Digital literacy skills among staff and students
- iv) A business model that incentivises University leaders and academics to develop online courses
- v) Skills and resources needed by leaders and managers to transform the DE system to align with a new vision fit for purpose for the future

The annual commitment to expand and improve the HE ICT infrastructure is helpful in addressing the first constraint, and projects such as TIDE are helping to address capacity and skill related challenges. However, policy changes are needed to adequately resource the work needed to properly address these challenges, and enable the challenge laid down by the Union Minister for Education to provide online short courses for school leavers, to support professional development and to provide a more flexible model of DE that is responsive to employer needs.

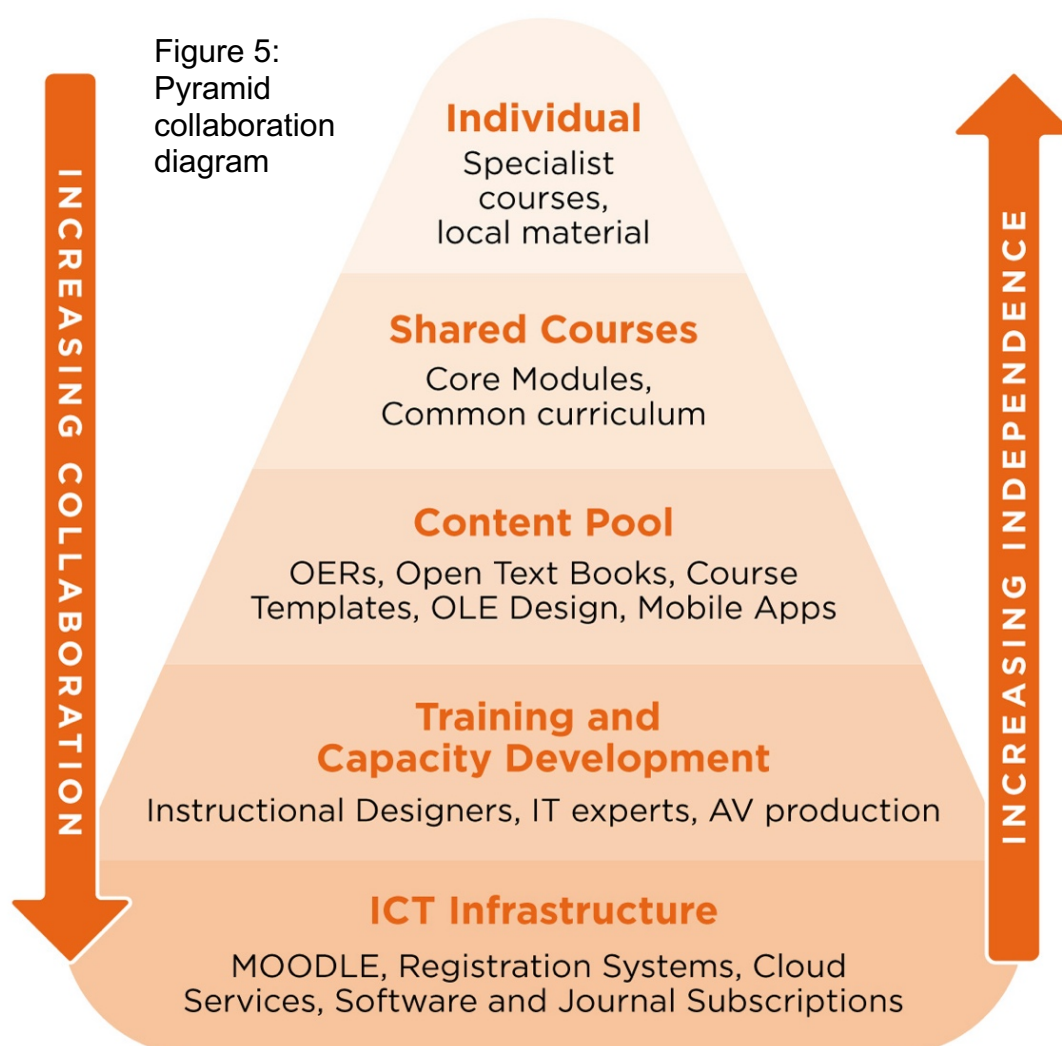
6.2 Kickstarting Online Course Development through Collaborations

In the short to medium term collaboration provides a strategy for starting to address the challenge of creating and/or delivering online courses, and enabling Y/MUDE and Universities operating the 'One campus two systems model' to find a way forward. This strategy may also lead to long term benefits.

Whilst collaboration offers some economies of scale it can also slow down developments as trust and potentially contractual agreements need to be developed between parties. Openly licensed content can encourage sharing and collaboration and openly licensed software can do the same but there is the underlying need for human technical support.

The pyramid diagram (*Figure 5 below*) is a way to visualise levels of collaboration. These levels illustrate dependencies. For example without ICT infrastructure you cannot launch an online course; without the skills required to support it you cannot launch a course, and without content you cannot run a course. However it is not always necessary for collaboration at a higher level to require collaboration at a lower level as the lower level requirements may have been met by the individual institution.

Potential for collaboration at the different levels is now discussed:



Sharing ICT infrastructure

ICT infrastructure varies greatly among Universities. Some 'Day campus' Universities currently have 4MB/s broadband access, whilst others (aided by MPT making additional free provision) now have up to 300MB/s. In some cases, just administrative offices have connectivity, whereas in others connectivity extends to libraries, and academic departments. Most significantly in some Computer Science and IT Universities including Institute of Information Technology (IIT) Yangon, Institute of Information Technology (IIT) Cybercity Yadanabon, Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT) and University of Computer Science Yangon (UCSY), the broadband connectivity is even greater, and they also have large computer labs connected to the Internet, and Online learning environments such as MOODLE. These institutions also express a willingness under the right arrangements to provide access to their ICT infrastructure.

Options to explore include:

- The scaling up of highly regarded online courses such as the YUDE law courses, where examinations need to be hosted onsite. This could potentially be achieved by collaborative arrangements with partner Universities elsewhere in the country, who have computer labs and facilities suitable for running the exam
- Hosting and supporting of online courses produced by Y/MUDE and Day Campus Universities by Computer Science and IT Universities. All have indicated capacity and willingness to collaborate. UCSY for example have indicated three different models by which they could potentially support hosting including on their internal servers, via MPT servers, or using Amazon Web Services (AWS). The UCSY server could be made available for small scale online courses (up to 2000 students). UCSY also offer live lectures using Zoom, and Polygon and broadcast lectures and webinars held by visiting Professors to other universities.
- Shared ICT infrastructure also offers the more immediate potential for launching and supporting licensed courses drawing on and adapting open licensed course content from other international Universities
- Universities such as YUDE, UIT Yangon, and Cybercity also have AV studios, and can potentially support other Universities in developing AV and multimedia learning resources, if relevant skillsets are more widely developed.
- A further and potentially radical option in smaller towns, could be to consider encouraging pooling of resources, building strategic alliances, or even merging Arts & Science and Computer Science Universities. This option, would provide potentially mutual benefits in the form of (a) shared ICT infrastructure and use of staff with ICT skills and skills relevant to online course development, and (b) more integration of ICT and digital components within Arts and Science courses, e.g. GIS skills, data science skills etc, and development of new degree programmes such as joint honours courses in Maths and Computer Science.
- National Comprehensive Universities could also explore avenues for collaboration in use of ICT infrastructure

Impact: Shared ICT infrastructure provides the platform support essential for running short online courses developed locally or licensed for local use

Training and Capacity / Skill Development

To develop and run online and blended learning courses requires a range of skilled staff potentially including authors, editors, translators, curriculum experts, tutors, graphic designers, AV and multimedia specialists, instructional designers with pedagogic expertise, learning technologists, ICT experts, production coordinators and librarians with expertise in copyright. Courses need to be developed drawing on a team based approach where some or all of these skillsets can be called upon. Ideally these skillsets exist within an institution, but this is not currently the case in Arts and Science Universities in Myanmar.

The TIDE project is currently playing a role in capacity development, but this is limited in terms of project time frame and overall reach. However, collaboration also provides an opportunity in the short term to leverage skills which do exist in the system. This can be approached in the following ways:

- Building on the Training of Trainers (TOT) and cascading models being introduced through the TIDE project. A cadre of 'Master trainers' within Arts and Science Universities supported by TIDE is being developed who can pass on their skills and knowledge to a wider group
- Drawing on the learning technology skills already evident in some of the Computer Science Universities, training can be organised to develop similar skill sets in other Universities. For example, Cybercity University, has staff who have been trained as Master trainers in e-learning, and is already providing training to staff at other Universities.
- Providing specialist training relating to AV, online learning environments, ICT, learning technology and instructional design skills to Universities such as Y/MUDE, UIT, MIIT, UCSY and Cybercity, can be an effective strategy, if they in turn provide downstream training and/or course production services to other Universities who are seeking to develop online/blended/distance learning courses
- A further option is to provide training on online teaching and learning, for example through a course (potentially linked to a PgCert) that a cadre of teachers from a range of Universities can enrol on. This course would enable them to be equipped with knowledge and experience both as learner and future online course teachers. They can then follow the TOT model and share this knowledge more widely. Creating this capacity will support scaling up of ability to offer and support online courses, potentially including licensing international open licensed courses.

Impact: Developing and leveraging the skills of training experts available locally, and use of a TOT model can rapidly develop the expertise needed to create, administer and tutor online courses.

Pooling Content

Collaborative arrangements between institutions or encouraged at the policy level, can support the creation of a high quality pool of open licensed content that Universities can use to support rapid development of online courses. The following options could be considered:

- Open approaches to content development and usage, so that educational resources sourced or created can be adapted and used by different Universities. This approach is being supported by the TIDE project, and the challenge now is to scale this up and make effective use of open licensed content
- This approach includes development of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Open Text books. Such resources may be print, or could be multimedia, but should all have a digital version that can be easily shared at low cost online. It can be expensive to develop multimedia material as compared to text based material and collaboration offers cost sharing for projects that no one university may be able to do on their own
- Development of Open Access repositories. Five such repositories already exist, and through the work of Myanmar Libraries consortium and the proposed MERAL project, open access materials could be made widely available to all Universities across the country, and links also made to other international Open Access repositories where educational resources relevant to Myanmar can be found. The eTekkatho libraries also extend access to Open access content, and the online/offline approach the eTekkatho mode supports is being further enhanced with the introduction of their new 'MyLibrary' product.

- Open licensed courses also represent a great starting point for identifying and launching courses, though the infrastructure and support systems are needed, and adaptation to local context is often essential.
- As well as academic content, there can also be value in sharing templates related to processes of content development, sharing the design approaches for Open Text books, and for online environment set up and navigation. Shared approaches can avoid reinventing the wheel and duplication of effort, and lead to resources that have common aspects/components to their design which are more readily understood by distance learners. This can also extend to policy documents, for example related to QA procedures to follow for online course design, implementation, and evaluation.
- The Internet and an identified range of online repositories and use of Creative Commons search engines can be a great place to start for finding open licensed educational content.
- Mobile apps could also be jointly developed that either make content more accessible, or that can be used to support the teaching of specific topics

Impact: Developing a pool of open licensed educational resources (covering a range of media), templates and processes provides a quick way of sharing material and practices that can be used by Universities to create course materials and text books. These, can support face to face or online courses

Shared Courses

Building on the collaboration around infrastructure and capacity/skill development, Universities can realistically see models for delivering online courses, which will in turn incentivise the development of such courses.

- Teams to work on upgrading existing undergraduate courses, to reflect the new KG +12 requirements, but also to produce course materials that can be supplied in digital form, and with appropriate levels of interactivity and use of multimedia. These courses could be supported by an Open Textbook model. Such course materials can be of value to both on campus and distance students, enabling contact time with students to be focussed on problem solving and adding value to the learning experience, rather than reiterating text book content. This type of approach is already being followed at UIT Yangon.
- Identification of course topics of shared interest to a range of Universities and working together on the development of the curriculum and educational resources. Open approaches will encourage this, and core modules could be identified that are shared, with the potential for Universities to develop their own specialist modules that relate well to local context and employment needs. Courses such as tourism, and marine science, have already been highlighted as having potential. This approach could be particularly suitable at the Post Graduate level, and starting initially with shorter PgCert courses which cost less to study, and are quicker to develop and bring to market
- Another strategy can be to adapt an open licensed course, this could be done for example with the PgCert related to online teaching and learning discussed above, to enable it to be used more widely.

Impact: Shared course modules can cut the cost and time involved in course development, and modules can be combined with specialist modules to create different courses tailored to the needs of different student communities.

Individual Activities

Producing, and offering an online course can be done at the individual University level, though as noted to do this well requires a strong team with a good mix of relevant skills, and a good ICT infrastructure will need to be in place. Even at this level, some measure of limited collaboration may be possible. For example, academic or technical expertise from another University could be called to address gaps, or relevant content found from an Open Access repository.

Impact: The individual institution is likely to be empowered in the short/medium term to develop some of their own plans, if the other levels of collaboration are in place creating a strong and effective enabling environment.

6.3 The Longer Term Vision for the DE System

The collaboration approach outlined above sets out an immediate pathway, that can be used for NCUs, the 1 Campus 2 System Universities and Y/MUDE in the short to medium term. However, it does not point to a clear overall strategy for where different activities, and capacity for open and DE, can or should be located in the longer term.

‘1 Campus 2 Systems’

The ‘1 Campus 2 Systems’ model establishes a role for Day Campus Universities which can be developed by them to provide blended learning responsive to their local contexts and employment needs. Long term collaboration on some courses among Day Campus Universities will likely be desirable, and they may benefit from longer term support from specialist Universities or external providers, in areas where economies of scale persist. Where possible building capacity within the HE system, rather than outsourcing specific services is desirable.

The longer term development of the ‘1 Campus 2 Systems’ model could provide a growing range of both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Ideally such courses draw on a common pool of educational resources, such as Open Textbooks and Study Guide material that can be produced with different media (print or online) and that support a pedagogic model that maximises the opportunity for student contact time with staff to focus on problem solving, discussions, critical analysis and practically oriented work rather than lectures focussed on introducing course material.

Some development of educational resources would likely be carried out by individual Universities who would usually have their own online platforms drawing on shared services eventually provided through mmREN, but with scope for some specialist services to also be drawn from some form of Centre of Excellence institution.

The implications of the introduction of the ‘1 Campus 2 Systems’ model, are felt greatest by YUDE and MUDE, where this policy change points to them taking on a new role. The Honourable Minister for Education has highlighted the need for YUDE and MUDE to provide short online courses for school leavers, and flexible qualifications that support long term professional development and lifelong learning. It has also suggested by some that YUDE could ‘upgrade into a Myanmar Open University’.

Future Institutional Models

There are various pathways that could influence the future development of YUDE and MUDE in different ways. Some options are now briefly presented. Note that as discussed further after the options are presented, these are not mutually exclusive:

Option 1: Focussing on ‘One Campus Two Systems’

This option would reflect a total decentralisation, and all capacity and expertise required for distance and blended learning, would be developed in the ‘One Campus Two Systems’

Universities, who would offer a comprehensive and flexible range of certificate, diploma and degree courses. The blended learning course offerings could reach out to rural communities, using approaches relevant to the local context. Individual Universities would be responsible for their own educational resource development and pedagogic approaches. To develop a suitable pedagogic model, Universities would need to consider what are the best tutorial support arrangements for students and the best assessment strategies for different courses.

Universities focussed on 'One Campus Two Systems' will also be well placed to offer on-campus and blended learning courses in science subjects where access to campus based labs may in the medium term be essential.

Disadvantages: limited or no economies of scale, and potential duplication of effort.

Option 2: Specialist Universities with a remit for Online Course Provision

In addition to the 'One Campus Two System' Universities, other Universities that specialise in online courses that can be offered at a Regional (Upper and Lower Myanmar) or National level are developed. The course portfolio could focus on subjects of wide interest and where flexible study is possible, and offer some courses with low fees focussing on access, but without necessarily having an open admissions policy.

These Universities could also develop courses with International partnerships drawing on benefits from Transborder collaboration, and with a view on offering internationally recognised qualifications at higher fee levels. These Universities would require academics in relevant subject areas.

They could develop their own courses or licence content from elsewhere. This option can potentially reflect a mix of Public and Private sector business models. Online courses could potentially be developed by these Universities but with delivery 'franchised' across other universities. Relevant strategies for tutorial support and assessment could also be online or blended.

The audience for these courses could be school leavers not gaining places at 'one campus two systems' Universities, and on further education supporting professional development.

Disadvantages: requires ICT access and digital literacy; access to deliver quality education at low cost may continue to be difficult. A network of community centres may be needed, with constraints on understanding the varied local contexts

Option 3: Centre(s) of excellence

This option would develop one or more institution to become a Centre of Excellence in Open and Distance Education, providing a range of services to Universities that provide open and distance courses. Services could also include activities related to ICT infrastructure, quality assurance, capacity development and training (related for example to e-learning skills), and specialist production of educational materials. Another important area would be potentially acting as a national academic professional development and

recognition provider i.e. doing the equivalent of what the Higher Education Authority (HEA) does in UK. This could be funded by institutional/member subscriptions and QA services to the DE/HE sector by running bespoke surveys of the student experience that could extend to running a national student satisfaction survey.

Whilst such centres would not require academics from a wide range of the subjects, they would benefit from academics focussed on educational practice. In particular, local research and scholarship capacity could be developed in open and distance education, that ensures that the system as a whole benefits from latest evidence based insights for example related to use of ICTs and pedagogical innovation relevant to different communities or locations. This model would require learning technology, and other specialist staff who are not subject to standard rotation policies being operated in the Myanmar HE system.

Disadvantages: Limited capacity may slow down system wide innovation, and some skillsets could become centralised.

Option 4: A Myanmar Open University

This model would offer a range of online courses made available nationally. The 'Unique Selling Point' (USP) would be online courses, though where essential the online approach could be blended with potential for face to face delivery or support. The level of 'openness' reflected in an Open University can vary, but an open admissions policy would give a Myanmar OU a distinctive approach, that promotes unrestricted access. The course portfolio could complement those offered through the '1 Campus 2 Systems' with greater focus on a flexible range of courses that are suited to those not registering with '1 Campus 2 Systems' Universities. A Myanmar OU could provide a first option for those who do not have the qualifications to gain entry to other Universities and/or a '2nd / alternative chance model' for those who want to develop qualifications needed to support career change. It could alternatively or additionally become the national provider of online Taught PG programmes, i.e. serving smaller cohorts but offering flexibility and scale for those already in work and with a first degree. There is a lot of online PG provision worldwide so this could be launched through some initial licencing of courses and content.

An Open University would have its own academic staff aligned to the course portfolio offered, and permanent staff with relevant expertise in use of learning technology and in pedagogical approaches.

Discussion of the above options

The options above are not detailed but characterise some different potential models that have their own strengths and weaknesses. They are not mutually exclusive but would vary in their potential implications for Y/MUDE:

Option 2 and potentially Option 3 could provide a development pathway for both YUDE and MUDE, though Option 3 could suggest a merged Centre of Excellence.

Option 4 would suggest a pathway to upgrade YUDE and potentially merge YUDE and MUDE as part of the plan to create a Myanmar Open University. Option 4 could alternatively suggest that the future for MUDE is likely to be either found within Options 2 or 3, or if not, its future is very unclear.

6.4 Model proposed for final ‘Scoping Workshop’ discussion



Left: Professor Dr Aung Tun Thet, Member of Peace Commission

Right: Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, Chairman of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) Council and founder of STOU

The model proposed for discussion at the final Scoping workshop comprised two main elements:

- i. Strengthening blended learning provision of ‘1 Campus 2 Systems’ Universities, who will access support and services from Specialist Institution(s)
- ii. Establishing a pathway to the medium/long term creation of a Myanmar Open University, which will ultimately become the Specialised institution referred to in (i), offering a range of courses, education research and services to other Universities in Myanmar

In addition, a related initiative to explore the feasibility of developing a ‘Digital Education Platform’ focussing on a ‘mobile first’ approach is briefly introduced below. Such a platform could strengthen the enabling environment for the Distance Education models outlined above.

Pathway to Proposed model

The following paragraphs outline a strategy for moving forward to the proposed model.

A) Strengthening ‘1 Campus 2 Systems’

Key areas of activity for strengthening the quality of distance education and blended learning course provision (including online components) are as follows:

- 1C2S Universities encouraged and supported to develop 2-5 year strategies for their vision for strengthening quality and relevant provision of DE in their locations.
- Build on the collaborative ‘pyramid’ model of relationships between higher education institutions (HEI) (described in section 6.2 above) including Computer and IT Universities, and potentially combining some activity with those Universities in the same location.
- Engaging with the specialist services available from the evolving YUDE/MUDE related institution (outlined below)
- Continue to invest in ICT infrastructure including Internet connectivity, wi-fi, and projectors, so that digital content can be used in classroom, and teaching can potentially move to a flip classroom model, and draw on a pool of Open Educational Resources and Open text books that can be available to both day and distance students
- Capacity development related to digital literacy skills of staff (academic and support) and students
- Capacity development around blended learning
- Development of new courses and relevant content
- Promoting access to distance education library resources
- Develop IT systems so that data such as student email addresses and mobile phone numbers is held centrally and by departments, enabling greater communication with students (day and distance) around logistics, and to support group online learning
- Develop new models for effective student support and assessment, that results in improvements in face to face aspects of the learning experience of distance students.
- Consider use of mobile learning support and a community learning centre outreach model to improve access and engagement with students throughout the study year
- Institutionalising policies and approaches to strengthen ongoing professional development, employer engagement, quality assurance and international collaboration

B) Specialist institution – a Myanmar Open University

Outlined below is a two stage process for moving towards establishment of a Myanmar Open University:

Stage 1: YUDE / MUDE develop characteristics of Options 2 and 3

The first stage involves YUDE and MUDE developing capacities, systems, structures and services, that will be relevant to the foundation of a Myanmar Open University (Mm OU) and potentially a second sister institution of some sort. This will involve development that combines features of the 'Specialist University with a remit for Online Course Provision' (Option 2) with the 'Centre(s) of excellence' (Option 3) models outlined above:

- In the short to medium term continue to build on the collaborative model outlined in section 6.2 above
- Developing a specialised cadre of staff who are not subject to the normal staff rotation system. These staff should include academics with relevant subject expertise (for a proposed Mm OU course portfolio), and with specialist knowledge and qualifications related to education and pedagogy, and also skilled support staff including learning technologists, librarians and IT staff.
- Staff development above could for example benefit from staff studying PgCerts in Online and Distance Education and a Certificate in Creative Commons Licensing
- Link staff development to competency requirements and potential emerging professional support frameworks (such as UK PSF)
- Establishing with the help of market research an initial academic course portfolio that Mm OU would offer
- Commit to ongoing development of online courses, building where possible on the mobile first digital strategy that responds to the way the ICT environment is developing in Myanmar
- Developing international collaborations and identifying potential short term courses that could be licensed.
- Developing the model of delivery for a Mm OU with National coverage. A decision would be needed here on whether Mm OU should deliver completely online courses or develop some blended courses with for example campus locations for potential residential schools, and outreach to a network of community centres for blended learning support
- Identifying and starting to offer a range of specialist services that would benefit NCUs and 1C2S Universities, e.g. pedagogy training, and support for educational resource development
- Commit to develop open approaches that would reflect the strengths of a Mm OU, including OER and Open Text book development and building of accessible online libraries and repositories that can respond to the needs of academics and enhance the student learning experience., educational resource development
- In collaboration with NAQAC develop quality assurance processes relevant to open and distance education, and potentially develop a role in quality assurance of 1C2S and NCU online / blended learning provision

A key decision needed will be whether YUDE and MUDE remain separate independent institutions with their own long term roles and mandate (following either Option 2 or 3

above), or whether one or both of them eventually become part of a newly formed Myanmar Open University.

Stage 2: Establishment of Myanmar Open University (Mm OU)

The activities outlined as part of Stage 1, together with the right investment and supported by clarity around the specific futures of relevant HEIs (i.e. YUDE and MUDE), pave the way for a transition to Mm OU, through the increasing alignment of the existing HEI model with that needed for a future Mm OU.

This second stage can progress in parallel and recognises that establishment of Mm OU requires a detailed business plan. Work on this would need to be resourced and conducted over an agreed timeframe. A range of elements will need to be described clearly in the business plan for the Mm OU. These include the following:

- Charter and governance arrangements
- Organisational Structure
- Infrastructure (physical and ICT)
- Legal foundation
- Staff model
- Pedagogical approach
- Academic portfolio
- Admissions policies
- Assessment model
- Specialist services
- Research agenda
- Systems for student lifecycle administration and support
- Quality assurance provisions
- Financial arrangements

C) Digital Education Platform

To support both short and longer term needs ideas are emerging for potential development of a Myanmar Digital Education Platform, that provides a strong digital ‘enabling environment’ drawing significantly on the potential of mobile learning approaches for future delivery of online courses. Such an environment could eventually respond to the needs of school leavers, undergraduates, postgraduates, and flexible lifelong learning, and provide a platform for a range of HE sector services and collaborations.

The thinking around this concept is at an early stage, with some initial needs assessment work being conducted as part of the TIDE project. To deliver such an initiative would require significant funding, clarification of objectives, and stakeholder engagement (including developing links with initiatives such as mmREN and MERAL). Successful design and delivery of such a platform could however result in significant benefits for the emerging HEI landscape related to online and blended models of education.

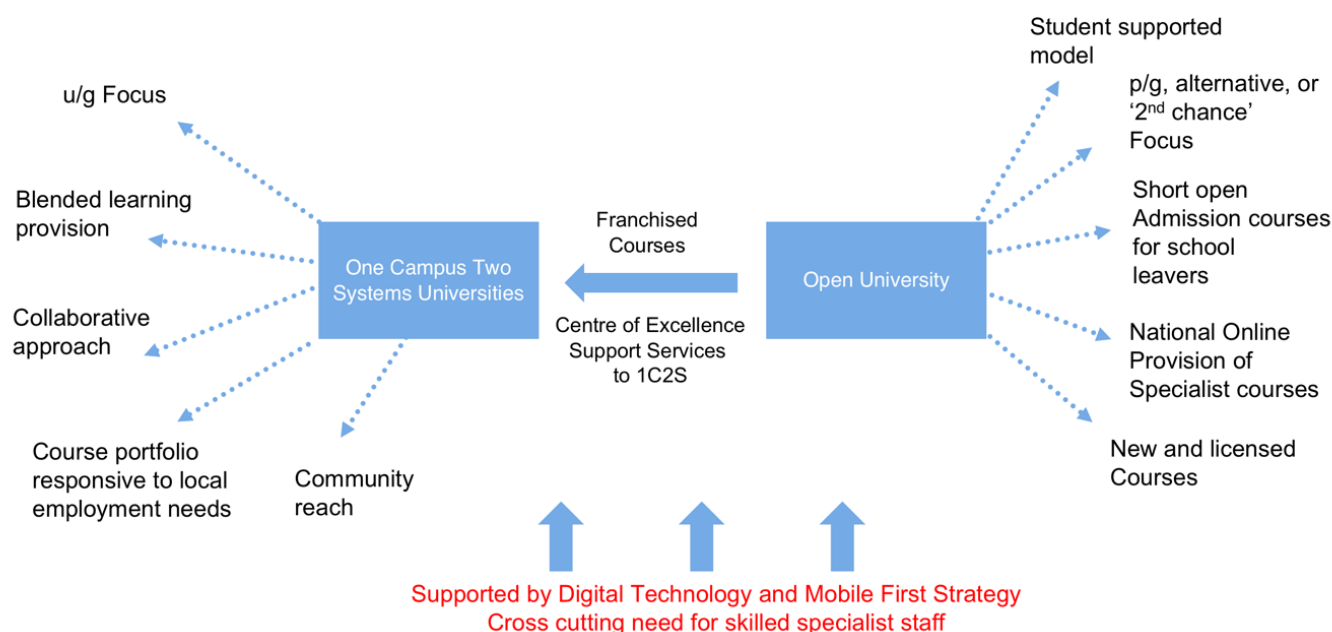
6.5 Final ‘Scoping Workshop’ outcomes

A short report on the final scoping workshop is provided in Annex 2.

Figure 6



Proposed Solutions



The model in the diagram summarises the proposal outlined in 6.3 above and provided the focus for discussion.

The main recommendations from the workshop were:

- **Strengthen the ‘One Campus 2 Systems’ DE provision**, by developing short courses that enhance employability skills of students; improving the systems for collecting and analysing relevant data to help understand student progression; and encourage day campus Universities to develop strategies for course development that are responsive to demand and based on a business model that incentivises developing high quality relevant online/blended courses
- **Recommendation for establishment of a Myanmar Open University**, and developing plans for its creation, detailing specialist functions/services. Mm OU should innovate in new forms of skill delivery, develop and offer short online courses that have wide application, and focus on quality. Importance is attached to developing a legal and policy framework, a business plan, outreach and engagement strategies.
- **Recommendations for creating an enabling environment**, by identifying a guiding coalition of key stakeholders committed to deliver on the goal of creating a Myanmar Open University; forming working group(s) to develop the detailed business case including infrastructure needs for Mm OU; determining data and system

requirements and introducing a staffing policy for ODL that can provide the necessary specialist capacity that will be needed in a future Mm OU

These recommendations represented an overall endorsement of the model proposed.

However, participants were not unanimous in stressing a focus on short courses, though it was recognised there were fewer barriers to introducing and testing such courses compared with launching post graduate diplomas or Masters courses).

There was also the strongly expressed view that Myanmar Open University should be developed in parallel to the existing system, and be designed on its own merits rather than as an 'upgrade' of existing institution(s). This however left open the possibility that over time, drawing on infrastructure, expertise and capacity from the existing system could be a possibility.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

This discussion document has covered the period to date (i.e. up to February 2020) of NESP 2016-21 and outlined significant ways in which the distance education system has been developing. In particular the implications of the policy change resulting in the introduction of the '1 Campus 2 Systems' model have been highlighted. The overall vision and related strategies for the DE system as a whole are evolving, and the TIDE scoping workshops have sought to usefully contribute to this process.

Next steps proposed are as follows:

- **Agreeing future strategy:** Agreeing and refining the future HEI model for distance education, including the future role for '1 Campus 2 Systems' Universities and any specialist DE institution(s) i.e. YUDE and MUDE
- **Setting up working group to develop plans for a Myanmar Open University:** Establishing a Myanmar led working group (or clear connection between the TIDE project and an existing group) to progress the detailed planning work needed. This could be within DHE, MOE, or the Rectors committee
- **Contributing to NESP 2021-2030:** Whilst the current NESP document covers all levels of education, it makes little detailed reference to a strategy for DE. The next NESP 2021-30 will include a separate document for the HE Sector strategy. Effective links need to be made between the TIDE project work supporting strategy development for HE/DE strengthening and the NESP 2021-30 development and document drafting process.
- **Focus for Future TIDE DE Strengthening work:** During the remaining period of the TIDE project (to 30th September 2021), there are resources allocated to supporting the process of developing strategies and plans for strengthening distance education at the HE level. There are three 'roadmapping' workshops planned with the first due to take place in March 2020, a second later in 2020 and the final one in 2021. To ensure that TIDE project work in this area is focussed on priority needs joint planning with the working group (proposed above) will be needed.

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Annex 1: Final Scoping Workshop Recommendations

TIDE HE/DE Strengthening: Scoping Workshop No.3
Exploring the future role of Distance Education in Myanmar's HE System
Yangon, December 4th-5th 2019

Workshop Outcomes and
Recommendations for '1 Campus 2 Systems' and a 'Myanmar Open University'

Background

As a part of its activities the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project has been supporting discussions to explore the strategies for strengthening online and distance education in Myanmar. A third workshop to 'scope' out options took place in Yangon, 4th-5th December. Over 25 participants representing a range of stakeholders from MOE, DHE, NEPC, NAQAC, NCC, Rectors Committee, Day Campus, Distance and Computer Science/IT Universities attended.

In addition, we were honoured to have present special international guests who shared their experience of distance education in their countries. These were Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, Chairman of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) Council and founder of STOU, and Dr Kaviraj Sharma Sukon, Director General of Open University of Mauritius. Dr Wichit was accompanied by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Somporn Puttapithakporn, Vice-President for STOU Council Affairs and Asst. Prof. Dr. Theradej Manoleehagul, Assistant President for University Council Affairs.

The workshop was facilitated by Jon Gregson, Matt Foster, and Sharon Davidson from the TIDE project team.

The main objective of the workshop was to identify the strategic priorities for development and strengthening of distance education and its contribution to the HE sector in Myanmar. In addition it is anticipated that these strategic objectives will be documented in a TIDE

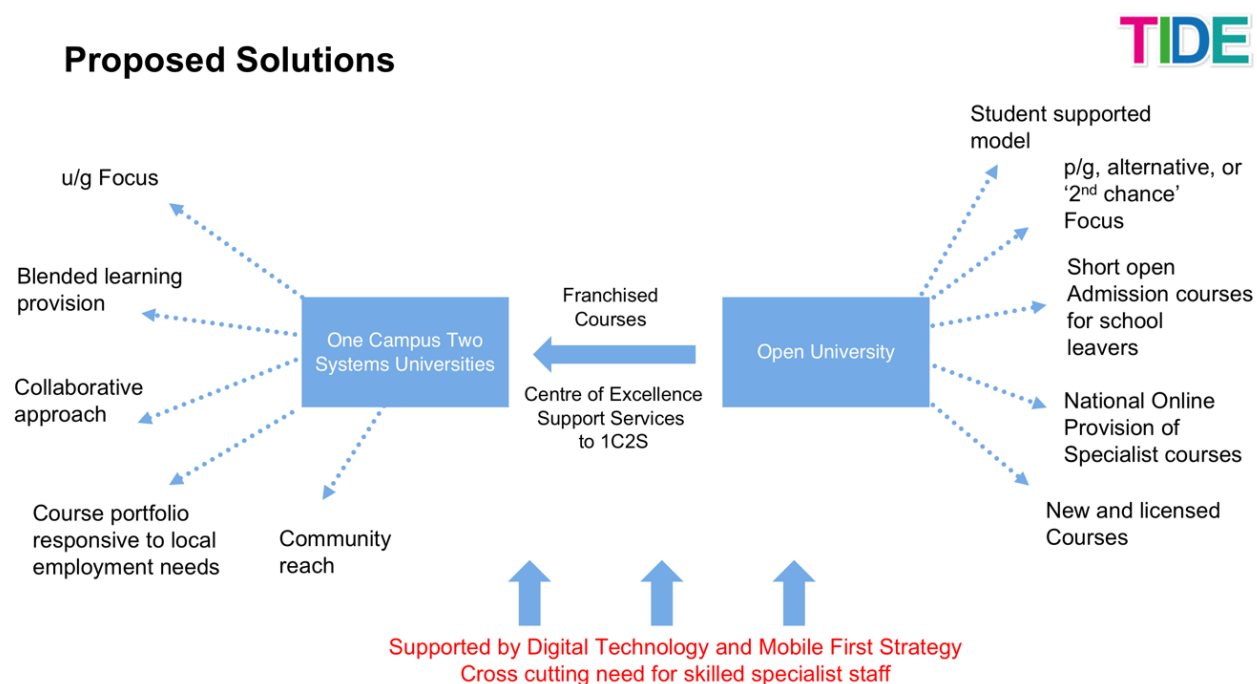
discussion paper which provide an input into planning for the next Myanmar National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2021-30

The two days of the workshop were divided into four main sessions:

- 1) Understanding the HE System Landscape and priorities for DE within this
- 2) Identifying priorities for strengthening and improving the quality of distance education across the '1 campus 2 systems' Universities delivering Arts and Science courses
- 3) Understanding the emerging roles for existing and/or new institutions supporting DE and Online learning and the role they play in the wider DE systems landscape.
- 4) Consolidation of plans, and next steps.

Approach Discussed

Throughout the workshop reference was made to provisional proposals outlined in a discussion document prepared by Jon Gregson and Dr Susan Fawcett, following a range of meetings with Distance, Day campus, Computer Science and IT University representatives. This discussion paper proposed a parallel process of strengthening blended learning (including distance education) provision of '1 Campus 2 Systems' Universities, whilst preparing for the launch of a new Myanmar Open University, with its own online course portfolio, that could also act as a Centre of Excellence for Online and Distance Education and provide courses and services to Day Campus and other Universities (including National Comprehensive Universities). The diagram below illustrates this proposal, but it should be noted that the exact nature of a Myanmar Open University would need to be considered. Our international guests, drawing on examples from UK, Mauritius, Thailand and beyond, highlighted that there are a range of models for Open Universities.



The model was broadly endorsed, with a clear overall recommendation from the participants to progress plans to create a Myanmar Open University.

The main recommendations coming out of the workshop sessions are as follows:

▪ **Recommendations for strengthening ‘One Campus Two Systems’ DE provision**

Leaders at these Universities, are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by the MoE/DHE to develop their plans for strengthening and improving DE quality through:

- i) Using **‘Action learning’ (or ‘design thinking’) approaches**: Develop short course to enhance employability skills of students (e.g. 30 hours). Within this, experiment with different student support models to develop principles for blended learning (according to the needs of different locations and the nature of skills required)
- ii) **Data**: Determine the key data needed to support online/blended learning course provision and support and to help understand progress on increasing the employability of students and use this on the initial short course(s), and develop systems for collecting and analysing this data
- iii) **Strategy**: At the same each HEI is encouraged to develop a strategy and costed plan for short-course, which includes consultation with employers to determine the focus of the next range of courses, and consideration of appropriate demand and fees levels. The individual University strategies should:
 - Identify key skills areas (i.e including learning design and IT) and therefore staff who need to be retained by the University to build a key capability in each University (e.g. exempted from 1 round of rotation or retained for a fixed period of time to deliver a specified task)
 - Explore collaboration with regionally based ICT/Computer Science Universities in delivering the above
 - Identify priority requirements from a Myanmar Open University in terms of the IC2S Universities’ ongoing support needs

▪ **Recommendation for establishment of a Myanmar Open University**

- i) Develop plans for creating a Myanmar Open University (Mm OU)
- ii) Develop focused specialist functions/services and policies for Mm OU to include:
 - Learning technology
 - Innovative use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)
 - Innovative qualifications
 - Stabilised specialist staff
 - Funding and policy
 - Developing capacity across the HE/DE system
 - Supporting development of professional standards
- iii) Mm OU should innovate in new forms of skill delivery e.g. micro or nano credentials
- iv) Develop and support short courses that have wide application (e.g. digital literacy or language skills)
- v) Develop a business model and plan including appropriate pricing for courses and course development costs (and related key performance indicators)
- vi) Develop policy for ODL to ensure quality (including consideration of the nature of any open admissions policy and parameters enrolling on short courses)
- vii) Review legal and policy framework to ensure enabling of growth in ODL and Mm OU -does this require a separate legal Act of Parliament?

viii) Campaign of outreach and engagement in the planning and launch of Mm OU to change the perception of ODL

▪ **Recommendations for creating an enabling environment**

In order to progress successfully towards the plans particularly for creating a Myanmar Open University the following initial steps are essential:

1. Establishing a guiding coalition of key stakeholders who can commit time, develop vision, and who have belief and persistence to provide leadership and deliver on the goal of creating a Myanmar Open University
2. Formation of a working group or groups to develop the detailed plans (including to make best use of TIDE support)
3. Determine the data and related systems required to keep a clear focus on overall goals for a Myanmar Open University (n.b. consider the role of the newly launched EMIS)
4. Develop a staffing policy for ODL and consider the appropriateness of staffing rotation alongside the need to develop concentrated specialist skills for irreversible change. Short term adjustments to the staff rotation policy can help develop the necessary specialist capacity that will be needed in a future Mm OU
5. Develop the business plan including the investment case for set up and specifying IT infrastructure needs for establishing a Myanmar Open University

Next Steps

The plans outlined represent an ambitious agenda to transform distance education, so the socio economic needs of the country are met through more employable graduates, and through democratisation of access to quality education. To achieve the goal of creating a Myanmar Open University a policy for providing autonomy, leading to committed skilled staff, and a clear financial model will need to be developed. The initial actions we propose to get this process moving forward are as follows:

- TIDE team members including Myanmar partner representation (2-3 volunteers required) will develop the draft recommendations above into a 4-6 page proposal document outlining the plans and recommendations.
- We will seek advice from the Rectors Committee on the best way to present this proposal document to senior decision makers (and identifying who these decision makers are)
- The same group will also update a discussion/background paper containing more detail which will act as a reference document, that can capture emerging policy recommendations that will be pertinent to planning of NESP2 (2021-2030)
- With the help of the Rectors Committee and DHE, establish workings group including Policy, Finance, and 3 University representatives (with experience in ODL) to support the process of detailed planning

Subject to encouragement from the Honourable Minister and MOE to move forward on the recommendations, and to the groups referred to above being formed, TIDE project team will arrange a 'road mapping' workshop in March 2020, at which the working groups will develop an initial draft (v1) of the detailed plan for launching a Myanmar Open University.

Jon Gregson and Matt Foster, Open University UK
December 6th 2019

Annex 2: Day Campus and Distance Education Universities in Myanmar

This annex lists the Universities currently involved in Distance Education provision. The TIDE supported Universities have been highlighted using the following colour coding:

2018 Cohort

2019 Cohort

Lower Myanmar	Upper Myanmar
Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE)	Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE)
Bago	Kalay
Dagon	Kengtung
Dawei	Kyaukse
East Yangon	Lashio
Hinthada	Loikaw
Hpa-an	Magway
Maubin	Mandalay
Mawlamyine	Meiktila
Myeik	Mohnyin
Patheingyi	Monywa
Pyaw	Myintgyina
Sittway	Mingyan
Taung Koke	Pakokku
Taungtha	Panglong
West Yangon	Sagaing
	Shwebo
	Taunggyi
	Yadanabon
	Yenanchaung

Note: Yangon University and Mandalay University are also part of the TIDE Cohort 2018.

Annex 3: Foresight Scenarios

Background

The content of this annex, is an edited extract from a report (full report available separately) on a foresight planning process, held in the lead up to the 1st Scoping workshop in September 2018.

The Digital Education Foresight Workshop

A 'Digital Education Foresight' workshop took place on 18th September 2018. The workshop was hosted by Irrawaddy Policy Exchange (IPE) and the Open University UK and involved a wider range of stakeholders with an interest in educational technology, including representatives from the private sector, civil society organisations, innovation organisations and academia. During the workshop participants shared insights related to the future vision for distance and digital education in Myanmar.

Digital Education Foresight Workshop Aims

The aims of this workshop are set out in the slide below:

The Future of Digital Education workshop

Kenneth K. Goldstein
THE WORLD OF TOMORROW
MICROARTIST INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY

Aims

- To explore trends in digital and distance education, and develop potential scenarios for the future of distance education at the HE level in Myanmar
- To engage with a wide range of stakeholders to gain insights and provide input into TIDE project activities aimed at strengthening HE in Myanmar

TIDE

The overall purpose of the workshop was not to predict the future, or to develop solutions for problems identified, but to gather a wide range of insights and perspectives, drawing in different types of evidence from the personal and professional experiences of the participants.

The workshop provided the opportunity for sharing on a wide range of topics relevant to the future contexts for digital education which is likely to be a key feature of all future plans for distance education in Myanmar. These insights were gathered through activities focussed on:

- Generating headline ideas of future priorities
- Identification of drivers of change
- Development of narratives for contrasting future scenarios

The workshop generated stakeholder input for the '1st Scoping workshop' held with the policymakers in Nay Pyi Taw on 21st September 2018.

The workshop commenced with a brief presentation by Jon Gregson highlighting the purpose of the workshop, which is not about trying to predict change, but to explore different perspectives and consider different scenarios which digital educators may face in the future. To set the context, the rapid pace of change in relation to exponential growth in use of digital technologies was emphasised. Some brief background related to the foresight approach was also presented.

Drivers of Change

During introductions participants highlighted some 'headline changes' they anticipated or issues they felt would be important for the future for distance education in Myanmar. Participants were then divided into four groups and commenced by reflecting on drivers of change that are likely to influence the future over the next ten years. The drivers of change were then classified using the five 'STEEP' headings:

Social - Technical – Economic – Environment - Politics

Participants were invited to vote on the drivers they considered to be the most significant in each of the five categories, i.e. in terms of their potential high level of impact or uncertainty.

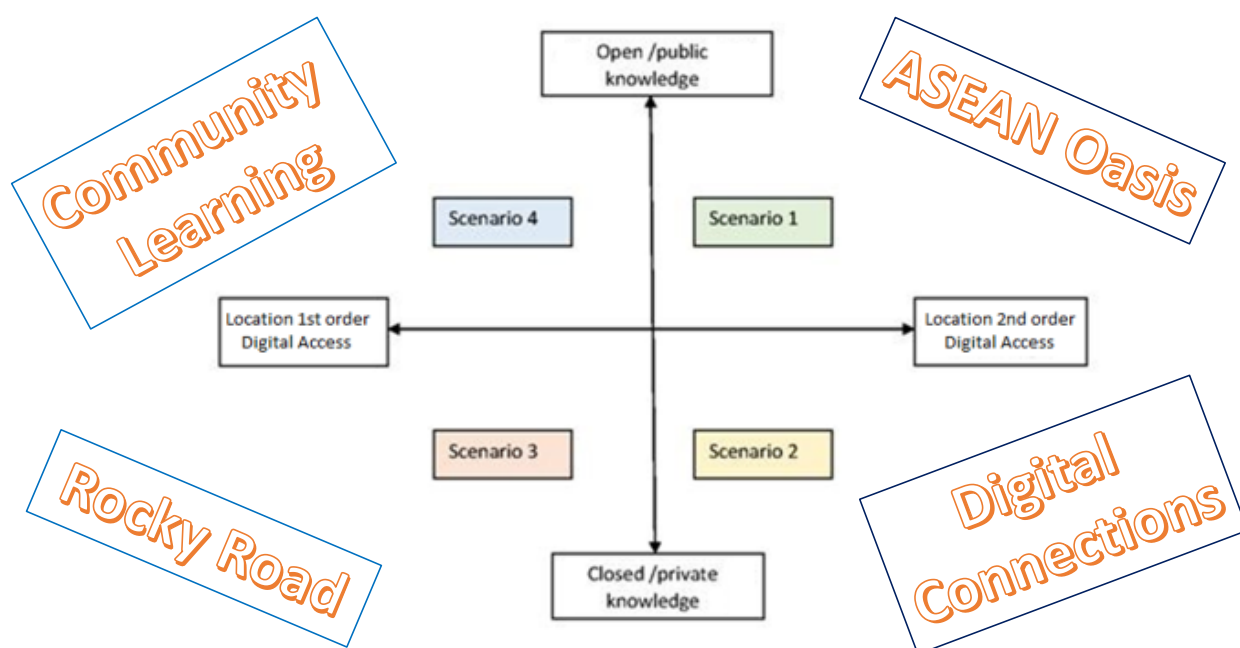
The table below shows the drivers of change for each of the STEEP headings that rated highest in the voting exercise.

SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation • Social Networking • Poverty and lack of widely available high-quality education
TECHNICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Learning Platforms • Social Media • Mobile Technologies
ECONOMIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Based Economy • Foreign Investment • Poverty Gap
ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change • Migration • Green Cities
POLITICS and GOVERNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralisation • Democratisation • Government Education Policy Changes • Opening up of HE to Private Sector and Internally Displaced Population

Developing Scenario Narratives

Following the identification of key drivers of change, the participants were now invited (in groups) to develop different scenarios expressed as narratives or stories describing how the future might look in 2028.

The '4-quadrant method' for developing contrasting scenarios was selected as the tool for developing four scenario narratives. This requires selection of two axes drawing on drivers of change that have high levels of uncertainty. The variables for the two axes illustrated below were proposed by Jon Gregson.



As shown in the diagram the axes selected represented the following variables:

- **Horizontal:** This axis covered a range from very poor ICT infrastructure, low rates of digital literacy and limited use of web-based services, to an excellent affordable high-speed ICT infrastructure supporting widespread mobile access to high end digital services which are available to a wide range of digitally literate people.
- **Vertical:** This axis contrasts the nature of intellectual property, which can be a free publicly available good, or owned by private individuals or private sector organisations under copyright or patent legislation. In the latter case knowledge is only accessed at a price determined by the market. Creative commons licences provide a range of licences which are closer to the centre where ownership is protected in different ways, but users can have free access and some rights to change and adapt materials.

With reference to the drivers of change, and the inputs reflecting diverse perspectives from earlier discussions, the four groups of participants developed potential narratives for each of the quadrants. The titles are shown in the chart above, and the narratives follow below.

The Four Scenarios

Participant groups took slightly differing approaches to developing their scenario narrative, and due to time constraints, there was variation in terms of how developed the narratives had become. Each scenario represents a purely hypothetical future. After each narrative, a brief analysis is provided highlighting some key observed elements for each scenario and identifying strategies that could be adopted that might make positive features of the scenario more likely to arise, and negative ones less likely. This analysis was done after the workshop by the report author with input from TIDE project team members.

Scenario One – Open Knowledge and High Digital Capacity

(including ICT infrastructure and digital literacy)

Title: ASEAN Oasis

Ni Ni is currently (in 2028) studying at the Institute of Sustainable Tourism Development which is one of the most attractive inter-disciplinary schools in ASEAN region. This institute was founded in 2022 by the support of Korea International Development Agency and it is located in Nay Pyi Taw. The central government has been hugely involved in the initiation and foundation of this institute. When ecological destruction and climate change was a centre of attention for many countries, Myanmar decided to make a significant investment in education to promote ecological stability and eco-friendly business. This decision drove Yezin Agricultural and Forestry Universities to transform and upgrade into an internationalised institute which has become famous for eco-tourism and socio-cultural sustainability.

Ni Ni has been passionate about sustainable ecology since she was young, and her desire is to create a business model which provides both employment opportunities together with an ecologically friendly approach and cultural promotion. Therefore, she decided to study Eco-Tourism at the Institute of Sustainable Tourism Development which will enable her to gain the knowledge she needs for her vision to be implemented. The institute is an important hub for ASEAN Association for Tourism Development and has strong collaboration with a large number of international eco-tourism organisations and institutions.

The course that Ni Ni is studying is uniquely designed for students who want to learn about both Ecology and Biodiversity in the promotion of sustainable tourism. All the

seminars and lectures are organised for both physical and virtual participation of students who have registered from across ASEAN countries. Tele-conferencing and webinars are major education tools for group work and discussions. Because the institute favours an advanced learning and teaching environment, Ni Ni prefers to use Virtual Reality (VR) for her practical work and assignments.

The main income streams for this institute come from the registration fees from hotels and tourism related businesses, and from admission fees from the ecological protection areas and theme parks. Thus, a student needs to pay approximately USD 200 as a registration fee for one course. This school is deliberately designed for non-degree courses and seeks to provide comprehensive technical skills with a focus on continuous lifelong learning as a key product. However, students can take credits from their finished courses, assignments and research activities and all these credits are valid to apply for any ASEAN universities and can therefore contribute to degrees recognized in the region.

Key features:

- Technology: This includes some high-end features e.g. Virtual Reality (VR) and use of a powerful multimedia learning platform
- Nature of education content: The focus is on open access content which is freely available to students
- Mode of delivery: This has a modular design based around a knowledge and competency approach for learning and teaching
- Business model: This seeks to provide a balance to support sustainability and growth
- Institutional model: This encourages collaboration with the private sector (tourism) and with other Universities who jointly provide accreditation

Relevant Strategies:

This scenario is seen as mainly positive, and potential strategies that could enhance the likelihood of achieving this model are:

- Creating specialist high quality institutions that have their own staff
- Development of skills to produce high quality 'Open Educational Resources (OERs)'
- Investment in ICT infrastructure
- Encouraging Public/Private sector partnerships in HE/DE design and delivery
- Encouraging collaboration with other HE/DE institutions that supports strategic cooperation for selected subjects and issues of regional and international interest
- Developing and adopting a systematic internationally recognised accreditation system
- Development of clear competency requirements for different subject areas and career paths
- Investing in the development of language skills

Scenario Two – Closed Knowledge and High Digital Capacity *(including ICT infrastructure and digital literacy)*

Title: Digital Connections

Poe Myar was a student from Loikaw in Kayah State, who progressed beyond expectation due to access to top of the range digital and information technology.

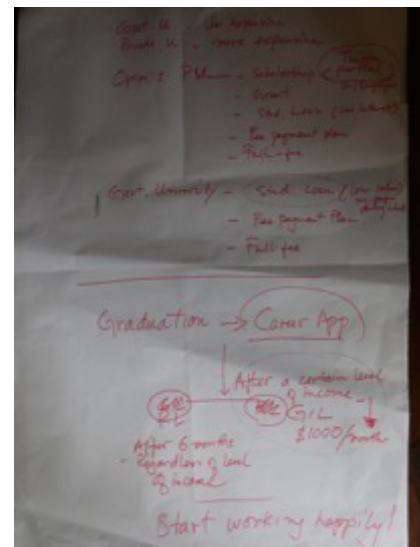
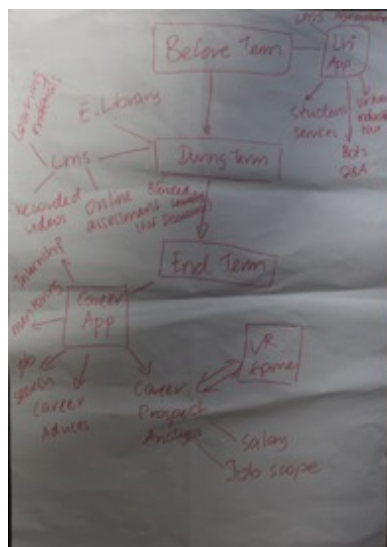
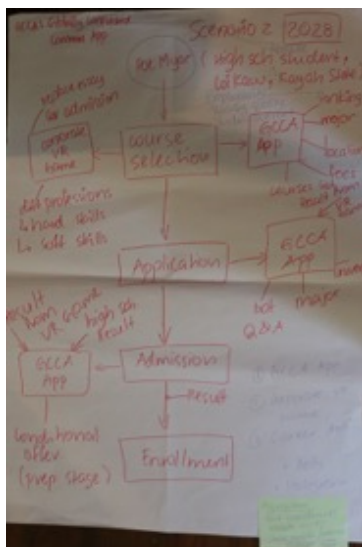
At the age of 10, Poe Myar was introduced to a virtual reality game - an integral part of her curriculum both at middle and high school. The game which is in the form of an app compiles a portfolio of learning activities over several years. From this accumulated data, a student's potential career choice is identified, and skills and abilities are honed. Poe discovers through this app that she has potential to become an aeronautical engineer. Having honed her skill in this field, using the app, she applies to study aeronautical engineering in her penultimate year at high school. Bear in mind that living in such a rural area Poe will not normally have access to aeronautical engineering internships, however she is able to gain core skills through the virtual reality app.

Towards the end of high school, Poe was introduced to another app known as the 'Connected Common Application System' (CASS). CASS is a multi-functional and multi-disciplinary 'application, selection and admissions system'. Poe's excellent virtual reality gaming app scores supported her CASS application, and she has successfully secured a conditional offer to study aeronautical engineering through distance learning.

The new CASS system allows for the application process to begin in the penultimate year of high school (rather than after graduation) and therefore is more time efficient. Having passed her matriculation exams, and achieved the grades required for aeronautical engineering, Poe enrolled as a distance learner.

As a distance learner, Poe uses her university's Learning Management Systems (LMS), blended with face to face tuition, and online forums to progress successfully through her studies.

You might be wondering how students can pay for this amazing educational experience. Well Poe's experience is not unusual and most students in Myanmar (both urban and rural) can access this high-quality education through the well worked out fee payment structure. Poe chose the option of a government student loan linked to her pay after graduation. This meant that Poe need not worry about repayment until she secures a job paying at least \$1000 a month, which she easily secures within 3 months of graduation.



Key features:

- **Technology:** This option draws from the best education innovations, to provide technology and digital literacy at every stage of Poe's educational journey.
- **Nature of education content:** Though living and studying in a rural area, the nature of educational resources available to Poe, is of the same standard as her counterparts in urban areas.
- **Mode of delivery:** The 'blended' (i.e. face to face mixed with online) mode of delivery of studies offered by this option is in line with many western countries.
- **Business model:** This model is cost effective as the fees system has been designed to be fair on students, yet recoup costs.
- **Institutional model:** This option provides for an institutional model that allows both public and private providers to thrive in the educational sector.

Relevant Strategies:

This scenario is mainly positive but presents some challenges for access due to the privatised nature of the licensing of educational content and as a result of the fee charging requirements. Potential strategies that could enhance the likelihood of achieving good outcomes related to this model are:

- Invest in high end ICT infrastructure that reaches both urban and rural areas
- Development skills to develop systems, apps and introduce the new institutional business model
- Commitment to digital literacy training from school (for teachers and students)
- Rapid development and implementation of strong systems for digitizing records, student data, and for supporting lifelong learning
- Encouraging public / private sector partnerships in the development and delivery of HE/DE and relevant courses
- Involve employers in supporting the funding for this initiative (e.g. through sponsorships)
- Develop an equitable scholarship and grants model

Scenario Three – Closed Knowledge and Low Digital Capacity *(including ICT infrastructure and digital literacy)*

Title: Rocky Road

This scenario is characterised by inequity.

This scenario anticipates climate change, natural disaster displacement and economic disruption so is a pessimistic one which all would hope doesn't materialise. The Distance education student in this scenario would have basic but expensive technology, and content would be limited and hard to access.

People still have basic technology, but it is more expensive than before. A lot of the more 'open technologies and content' are hard to access or censored. Digital literacy is a concept that receives little attention, and the majority of people don't have the essential skill sets to make good use of the digital environments available to support education. The wealthy and upper class send their children abroad for their education.

The distance education student is having to survive and adapt to an environment where the economy is struggling, incomes are low, and there is limited access to quality education, little connection to the outside world, and a lot of constraint and limitations on what can be done or accessed online.

Key features:

- Technology: Basic mobile technology accessible to most of the population
- Nature of education content: Remains mainly paper based due to limited digital literacy and limitations on available budget for investing in innovative and new educational resources
- Mode of delivery: Primarily on campus and distance with limited use of ICTs and online courses
- Business model: HE/DE is funded by the tax payer, with small fees charged to students
- Institutional model: Public sector is still playing the major role in HE/DE, providing mass education and a set number of approved curricula. The role of the private sector in HE initiatives is limited

Relevant Strategies:

Scenarios are shaped by events – political, environmental, technical, social and economic, and these events influence education in terms of institutional structure, innovation, relevance and what can be afforded by State and individuals. Some events, such as natural disasters, we cannot control but we can anticipate and plan how we might reduce risk and mitigate. Other events we can influence through being clear about our values and vision. Discussions related to Scenario 3 presented a pessimistic version of what may be the situation in 2028 in a ‘closed knowledge and low digital capacity’ context and drew attention to ‘bigger picture’ drivers of change. Below we highlight some of the strategies relevant to HE/DE which could help avoid this rather negative situation:

- Focussing on developing HE policies that support inclusion, openness and engagement with wide ranging local, national and international perspectives
- Building resilience and strong foundations into the education system that reflect democratic values and a decentralised approach
- Investing in curriculum development that is relevant to a vibrant and entrepreneurial job market and that also reflects diverse perspectives
- Developing and implementing policies that promote digital literacy for all, and provide relevant education and skill development for those who may find it difficult to afford or access HE at campus Universities (n.b. they may be working for example in agriculture, be carers for elderly family, or disabled)
- Promoting community-based and driven approaches to HE/DE access that make effective use of ICTs to support and extend education and bridge digital divide issues

Scenario Four – Open Knowledge and Low Digital Capacity *(including ICT infrastructure and digital literacy)*

Title: Community Learning

Community learning centres expand access to high quality practical education

Phyo lives in a rural village in Magway travels 45 minutes every week to a community learning centre where she attends practical sessions in small business development with other students and volunteer mentors who have experience themselves as local entrepreneurs.

This is complemented by self-study through high quality digital education resources that Phyo is able to use at home – studying for 8-10 hours a week on her tablet and accessing the next set of educational resources each time she visits the community learning centre – this means that she is not reliant on high speed internet access and high data usage costs when studying – a mobile library also visits regularly to the village in case students there cannot travel to the community learning centre.

Their course is modular with a practical assessment at the end of each module – Phyo has already received a certificate to demonstrate that she has achieved a level of competency – the competency-based certificates are highly valued and Phyo is planning to study a number over the next few years to develop her portfolio of competencies (although she is not yet sure if she needs or wants to build up enough of these to convert these into a full-degree).

Key features:

- Technology: limited use is made of ICTs but as a result of the design of this model there is a reasonably high level of digital literacy
- Nature of education content: This is mainly open licensed which results in low cost to access for the user
- Mode of delivery: designed to be modular with a strong feature being credible certification of competencies
- Business model: investment through Public-Private Partnerships means that there is low cost to the learner due to the high volume of students participating
- Institutional model: there is a standardised provision of educational resources and assessment across the country, with localised student registration and support

Relevant Strategies:

This scenario finds some creative solutions to an ongoing issue of low digital capacity and to the challenges of providing high quality access to those in rural areas. Potential strategies that could enhance the likelihood of achieving some of the positive features of this model are:

- Creating a flexible and accessible HE/DE educational system blended learning model with support services developed close to communities where students live
- Investing in use of growing connectivity and affordable mobile technology
- Investing in digital literacy needs from school onwards
- Establishing competency-based certificates that build towards a full degree

Analysis of Strategic Implications

The scenarios produced are intended to provide insights into how the context for Higher/Distance education in Myanmar might look in ten years' time. The narratives that were produced, draw in different ways on the drivers of change that had been identified. Some groups focussed more on the technologies, whilst others gave more attention to socio-economic, political or environmental factors. All highlight different opportunities and challenges, and whilst different participants may have produced very different narratives, many of the same themes are likely to have emerged.

Some of the scenarios may also share features, and when thinking about the future we can draw out elements that we like or dislike from all scenarios. In that sense they are not mutually exclusive, and a next stage in 'foresight' work is usually to seek to develop a new/fifth 'preferred scenario' which represents the future that participants would most like to see. Whilst there was not time to do this at the workshop, the box below highlights a valuable synthesis of 'strategies' drawn from an analysis of all four scenarios. These strategies are worth referring to when developing a vision for the future of DE/HE.

Summary of strategies:**Institutional reform**

- Create specialist high quality institutions that have their own staff
- Develop skills to design and implement student lifecycle support systems, and apps, that support the introduction of a new institutional business model

Curriculum and Content

- Develop skills to produce high quality 'Open Educational Resources (OERs)'
- Develop and adopt a systematic internationally recognised accreditation system
- Develop clear competency requirements for different subject areas and career paths, and link this to a flexible certification model that builds towards a full degree
- Invest in curriculum development that is relevant to a vibrant and entrepreneurial job market and that also reflects diverse perspectives

Technical Infrastructure and Systems

- Invest in high end ICT infrastructure that reaches both urban and rural areas
- Invest in use of growing connectivity and affordable mobile technology
- Promote community-based and driven approaches to HE/DE access that make effective use of ICTs to support and extend education and bridge digital divide issues
- Rapid development and implementation of strong systems for digitizing records, student data, and for supporting lifelong learning

Digital Literacy and Language

- Develop and implement policies that promote digital literacy for all from school level onwards (including teachers and students)
- Provide relevant education and skill development for those who may find it difficult to afford or access HE at campus Universities (n.b. they may be working for example in agriculture, be carers for elderly family, or disabled)
- Invest in the development of language skills

Access, Equity and Inclusion

- Develop an equitable scholarship and grants model
- Focus on developing HE policies that support inclusion, openness and engagement with wide ranging local, national and international perspectives
- Build resilience and strong foundations into the education system that reflect democratic values and a decentralised approach
- Create a flexible and accessible HE/DE educational system blended learning model with support services developed close to communities where students live

Stakeholder Engagement

- Encourage public / private sector partnerships in the design, development and delivery of HE/DE and relevant courses
- Involve employers in supporting the funding for this initiative (e.g. through sponsorships)
- Encourage collaboration with other HE/DE institutions that supports strategic cooperation for selected subjects and issues of regional and international interest

Many of these strategies reflect elements of the Myanmar 2016-21 National Education Strategic Plan.



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